

MY LIFE 

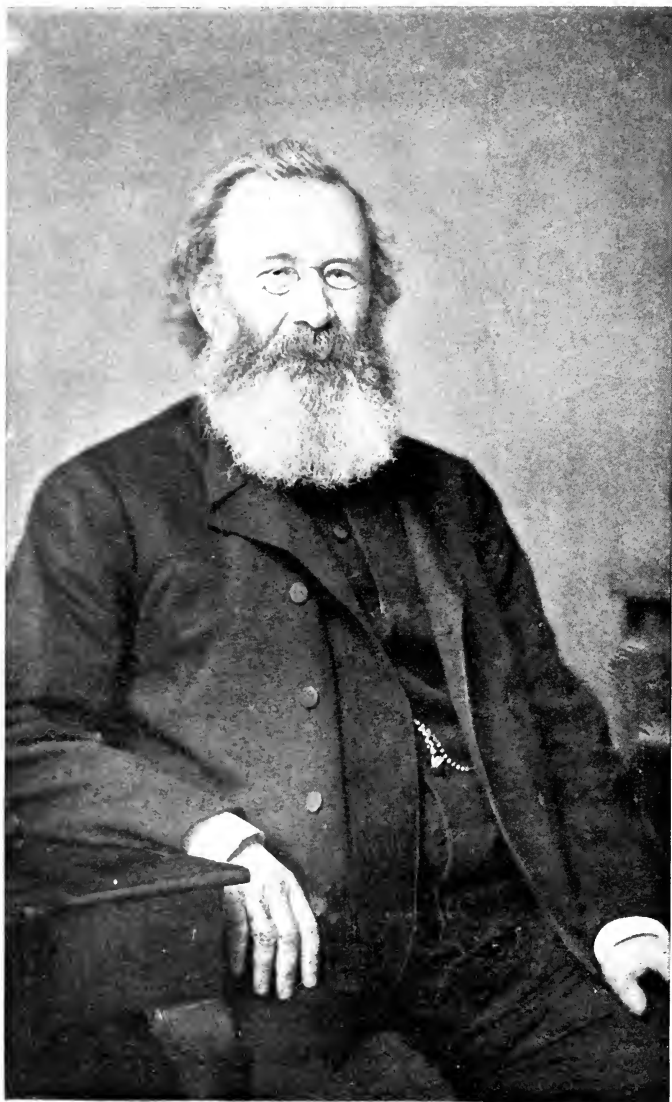
IN CONNAUGHT

REV. T ARMSTRONG



24 45





REV. THOMAS ARMSTRONG, 1892.

[Frontispiece.]

MY LIFE IN CONNAUGHT

With Sketches of Mission Work in
the West

BY THE LATE

REV. THOMAS ARMSTRONG

||

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE

REV. J. M. HAMILTON, D.D.



LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1906

LOAN STACK

BX 9225

A7A3

1906

P R E F A C E

MRS. ARMSTRONG has asked me to write a sentence or two which might serve as a preface to her loving biography of her late husband. What can I say except to comply with such a request, and to thank her that she has put into permanent form a record of thrilling interest? The Rev. Thomas Armstrong was no ordinary man. An Irishman to the finger-tips, his career in the most Irish of the Irish provinces was remarkably picturesque and full of stirring incident. For a generation he stood full-square in the eye of his Church as her missionary and representative in Connaught; and his annual visits to Scotland and England, his ready speech, his versatile character, his overflowing energy and good-humour, besides his intense earnestness in the prosecution of his work, made him known far and wide as a typical Hibernian. The following pages will reveal to a new generation much of what Ireland and Irishmen were in the Victorian era, and the reader may be sure that there is not a dull line in them. Mrs. Armstrong has done well to place this chaplet on a never-to-be-forgotten grave, and I hope her book will find as many readers as it deserves.

SAMUEL PRENTER.

DUBLIN,
June 1, 1906.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

INTRODUCTION

IN editing and republishing this brief account of the Rev. Mr. Armstrong's life and labours, Mrs. Armstrong has done a valuable service to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. I have never read a more interesting narrative than the story of 'My Life in Connaught.' Only a few months before the famine of 1846-1847 Mr. Armstrong left his home in Ulster to labour in what was then the 'Far West.' The scenes of hunger, disease, and death which he witnessed are told in thrilling language by one who passed through them, and his vivid descriptions help us to realize the misery of that awful time.

Mr. Armstrong also tells of the opposition of the clergy of the then Established Church to our ministers in the discharge of their most solemn duties. It seems almost incredible nowadays that at a period well within the memory of many still living the Protestant Episcopal ministers denied to Presbyterians in Co. Mayo—and often nearer home—permission to lay their dead in their last resting-place accompanied by the simple service of the Presbyterian worship. The specimens of clerical discipline on the part of another section of the community are also highly instructive.

But these times are passed. We are in some respects living in a new Ireland, and Mr. Armstrong gives much interesting information of the progress of the Presbyterian

Church in Connaught. His sketches of the early labours of Drs. Hall, Magee, and T. Y. Killen, and of many others who in their day did a great work for God, and who are now gone to their rest and their reward, will prove most valuable to the future historian of the Church.

We cannot close this brief notice without referring to the noble work done by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong in connection with the Connaught Schools and Orphanage, Mrs. Armstrong's account of which suitably closes the volume.

J. M. HAMILTON, D.D.

ILLUSTRATIONS

REV. THOMAS ARMSTRONG, 1892	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
SEAWEED GATHERERS	-	-	-	-	<i>To face page</i> 16
BALLINA	-	-	-	-	„ „ 64
BALLINA ORPHANAGE	-	-	-	-	„ „ 182
REV. THOMAS ARMSTRONG	-	-	-	-	„ „ 207
LEENANE SCHOOLHOUSE	-	-	-	-	„ „ 224
'OUR GENTLE MOTHER'	-	-	-	-	„ „ 255
MEMORIAL IN BALLINA PRESBYTERIAN					
CHURCH	-	-	-	-	„ „ 261
LITTLE GEORGE AND JOHNNY	-	-	-	-	„ „ 279

PART I

CHAPTER I

IT is now just forty-four years since I left my native town of Monaghan for Connaught and Ballina. My father was a leading member of First Monaghan congregation, as were indeed my ancestors for several generations. I was brought up under the ministry of the Rev. John Bleckley, to whom also I owed my education. He kept a classical school, and trained many candidates for the ministry. After being licensed by the Presbytery, I preached my first sermon in the church to which I belonged before my own school companions and playfellows. It was rather a trying ordeal, but I survived it. The times were not very cheering for probationers; they were some eighty in number, while the vacancies were not more than eight or ten. The Colonial Mission was a thing of the future, and there was nothing to relieve the congested list. The pay for supply was even still smaller than now. I travelled part of two days by coach and car, preached twice on the Sabbath, addressed the children, visited through the congregation for three days, conducted the Wednesday evening service, and was handed the munificent sum of ten shillings as my remuneration, viaticum, etc., and this, too, in the County Down! However, I did not get the call—it was given, doubtless, to one more worthy of the place and pay. For about twelve months I preached for the ministers of the Presbytery all around, who took their ease for the day, and considered their hospitality

quite sufficient recompense for my services. Getting dissatisfied with this sort of work, I applied to the Board of Missions to give me an appointment in the South or West. I was offered the supply of Ballina Mission Station for two months, which I accepted.

Connaught was at that period an almost unexplored region. There were no railways. The long Bianconi car was the great locomotive of the province, if an occasional mail-coach be excepted. The proverbial poverty and wildness were deterrent to travellers, and the inhabitants of the other provinces rather looked down on a Connaughtman with undisguised contempt. My dear mother bade me good-bye, with her blessing, but could not conceal her forebodings that I would either be starved in that wretched country, or—equally horrid alternative—marry a Connaught woman. One of her predictions was really fulfilled. It is not necessary to say which of them.

On a dark and dismal night in the month of November, 1845, I left Monaghan by the Belfast and Enniskillen mail-coach—a vehicle famous neither for its rapidity of motion nor for its comfort and safety. Drawn by two horses, it dragged its slow length along through the tedious night, the journey being diversified at irregular intervals by a breakdown or an upset into the ditch. Next day the Bianconi brought me to Sligo, which I entered in a torrent of rain, thoroughly drenched. Our worthy minister, Rev. James Heron, sought me out, as I was preparing to resume my journey to Co. Mayo, and I enjoyed his kind hospitality for a couple of days. I, then and subsequently, formed the acquaintance of several of his people, settlers, some from Ulster, and others from Scotland, who occupied a prominent and respectable position in the town and neighbourhood. There were the Ramsays, Culbertsons, Fergusons, Balfours, Robertsons, and others, all now gone, leaving none of their name or race in the Presbyterian Church there. Their places, however, have been occupied by others who worthily represent and sustain our cause in that important locality.

On the last Sabbath of November I preached for the first

time in Ballina to a congregation of eight souls. The place of meeting was used by the Episcopalians as a school during the week, and rented to us for the Sabbath. Previous to my arrival, an occasional service had been conducted on Sunday evenings by the Rev. David Rodgers, minister of Killala.* In this way a connection was kept up with a number of Presbyterians who attended the Episcopal or Methodist Church on the Sabbath mornings. It was found, however, that this plan, which was in operation for nine years, was not satisfactory in its working, as many lived in the country and could not attend in the evenings. The Board of Missions, therefore, decided to have regular ministrations both morning and evening, and appointed the Rev. Archibald Lowry, a licentiate of the Down Presbytery, to take charge of the station, which he did in August, 1844. He had also the oversight of the old Irish schools. The duties of both parts of his work Mr. Lowry discharged with strict conscientiousness until his removal to Roundstone, Co. Galway.

At this date the Presbytery of Connaught reckoned five congregations—Sligo and Ballymoate, in Co. Sligo, Killala, Westport, and Turlough, in Co. Mayo. The Presbytery itself was organized by the Synod of Ulster in the year 1825. But Presbyterianism was little known throughout the West, and in some places not highly respected. The cause had, indeed, been well and worthily represented in several districts, but in others, I am constrained to say, without unduly reflecting on the departed, it was otherwise. Our ministers were placed in trying circumstances. Isolated from one another, having only occasional meetings of Presbytery, without the solace and cheer of a friendly visit from their more favoured brethren in the North, no wonder that, having little ministerial work to engage their efforts among their scanty flocks, they should fall into a state of indolence and indifference.

* In severe winters Mr. Rogers used to rent a house in Ballina that he might remain all night ; but some time before Mr. Armstrong went to Connaught he was getting too infirm to go regularly, so that an occasional service only was held.

Nor were the Episcopalian clergy any better. Not a few earnest and devoted men, the survivors of a period of evil manners and culpable neglect of duty, were to be found, but others were unworthy of their sacred calling. Some rectors kept hounds, and were as regular at the hunting field as in the pulpit. One of them I knew spent his Sabbath evenings playing ball with his boys at the gable of the parish church. I was seriously advised by a gentleman to buy a hunter and don a red coat, he assured me I never would succeed as a clergyman unless I followed the hounds. Still greater offences than those referred to were alleged against others, who were boon companions of the priests, and partakers in the evil habits of a godless gentry. No wonder that large defections from Protestantism resulted. Intermarriages with Roman Catholics were not infrequent, the effects, as a rule, being favourable to Romanism. It was to me a melancholy sight to read on the signboards of our western towns names strictly Scottish and Presbyterian borne by devoted adherents of Rome. The Methodists, with commendable zeal and activity, supplemented the lack of service of the Established Church and kept alive in many places the fire of pure religion. For their successful efforts in preserving many from perversion they got scanty thanks then or since.

In Ballina matters were rather different. The rector was one of the high and dry school, an aristocrat, who only visited among the gentry class, and that not as a pastor, but as a friend. His stock of sermons numbered twelve. In this respect, however, he was in advance of his predecessor, an archdeacon, who had only six. But he had two curates, for his was a union of seven parishes. These men were thoroughly evangelical in sentiment, good Christians and faithful workers. The Methodists had two preachers of the usual stamp, and there was a Baptist minister, more pious than strong. These three were very indefatigable in their visitations of Presbyterians, as well as of their own flock.

The Presbyterians were few in number, composed mainly of the shopkeeping and farming class, or employés of the gentry. Some had joined the Episcopal Church, and

had formed such social connections that could not be severed.

Such was the situation. Great difficulties to be overcome, and few encouragements. I had purposed to return to the North at the expiry of my two months' appointment, but, neglecting to give due notice to Mr. Bellis, the secretary, I felt bound in honour to remain for another two months. The attendance at our meetings improved considerably. All the available Presbyterians were gathered in, rather to the vexation of my ministerial brethren, whose congregations were thus somewhat thinned. Members of other communions became attached to our cause, and in the month of March a call was made out in my favour. I considered that the finger of Providence had pointed out my way, so with no small fear, yet in faith, I accepted the call, and was ordained the first minister of Ballina on May 6, 1846.

In the ordinary course, all would apparently have gone on well. The congregation, though small in number, was vigorous and hopeful. Measures were taken to procure a suitable site for the erection of a church and manse, when events occurred which necessarily postponed our plans, seriously affected the congregation, and in a more widespread sphere scattered desolation and death throughout the land. I refer to the memorable famine and fever years, whose horrors I witnessed, and which have left an impression on my heart that can never be effaced. The effects on the congregation were disastrous. The members who were in business nearly all left the town. The employés of the gentry were discharged. The farmers were ruined. The stipend sank from the £60 promised to £20, which sum was all I received for years, and as the R.D. had not been obtained, I was dependent on the Mission grant for support. The amount was small—£70—and it was irregularly paid.

CHAPTER II

AT the period referred to in 1845 the social condition of the Province was very low. One thing that especially struck me was the teeming population, even in the poorest localities, where it was manifest human existence could not be maintained with any amount of comfort. The dwellings of the people were, as a rule, very humble cabins, in some instances cut out of the surrounding bog which formed natural walls for three sides ; the front was made up of the sods dug out of the soil, and the whole thatched with heather. The inside was bare and cold, the furniture hardly deserving the name. But the house was normally full of children, to say nothing of the pigs and other domestic animals herding together day and night.

This state of things was largely accounted for by their mode of living. The potatoes constituted the food. This crop, easily produced and requiring little labour, had been for years remarkably abundant. There was no inducement to industry. The young people got married very early in life. The driver of the Bianconi from Sligo to Ballina said : ' As soon as a lad gets his first brogues or has his first shave, his next thought is to have a wife.' I asked : ' But how do they live ? ' ' Why,' said he, ' the parents give them some ridges of land, on which they plant potatoes and cabbages. They put up such a cabin as you see. Their furniture consists of a pot, a big stone for a table, and a lock of straw in the corner for a bed.' This was hardly an exaggeration as concerning a considerable number. So the four ' P's,' as they are called,

went on in due order—potatoes, population, poverty, Popery.

The landlords were largely to blame in permitting the minute subdivision of land. The priests were not averse to it, for as their revenues were mainly derived from fees for marriages and baptisms, it was their interest to encourage early matrimony. The landed proprietors, with a very short-sighted policy, allowed their tenantry to sub-let their little farms among their families. They had the temptation of getting for the time a higher rent. Some years after, when there was a revival after the famine, a young man said to a landlord in my presence: 'Will you take the offer I have made for the vacant farm?' 'I have,' said the landlord, 'got a higher bid than yours.' The man replied: 'Sir, the highest offer you get, I will give more.' Both were wrong, the one in undertaking a rent he could not pay, the other in taking a tenant who in a short time must fall into arrears and incur the penalty of eviction. But this 'earth hunger' on the one part and bad management on the other, were factors in producing ultimate ruin to both. As to the landlords, while many were wise and prudent men, and kindly in their dealings with the tenants, not a few were the very reverse. Inheriting estates overwhelmed with debt and mortgages, from the extravagance and reckless prodigality of their predecessors, some were utterly unable to be generous, not to say just. Others inherited the vices with the pecuniary liabilities of those who had gone before them. The younger sons of the gentry were too proud to enter into business, and hung about the paternal domains in idleness and immorality, till at last, and suddenly, the judgment came—the famine which consigned the peasantry in thousands to an untimely grave, deprived the owners of the soil of their properties, reduced many to beggary, and transferred their ancestral estates to the hands of others. This result would have inevitably come in process of time by the working of economic laws. Poverty and distress would also have been gradually intensified among the lower classes. The famine but hastened the catastrophe.

In the autumn of 1845, there had been a partial failure of the potato crop, causing some distress, but not enough to excite alarm or instigate to preparations for the future. There was no Joseph to warn of the coming famine, and prepare to meet and mitigate the consequences. In August, 1846, I drove some miles to the neighbourhood of Killala, accompanied by a friend, in connection with an interesting event in the domestic life of one of us.* Returning in the evening, we observed a damp, dense mist covering the country on all sides. The next day I had occasion to travel a considerable distance in the direction of Castlebar and Westport. Everywhere the fields presented a melancholy sight. The leaves and stalks of the potato were all smitten with blackness, and already a sickening stench was emitted. This was the beginning of sorrows. For a while the intensity of the calamity was not realized, but ere long it came with fearful force to the minds and hearts of all. At first the poor remnants of the crop left unhurt were utilized, and the oats provided meal. Before many months, however, these supplies were exhausted, and death stalked abroad with rapid strides. Multitudes died of sheer starvation. The ordinary rites of burial were neglected. Bog-holes and ditches by the wayside received the wasted remnants of poor mortality, and the pall of dark despair shrouded the land.

But was no effort made to meet the case and rescue the perishing? Yes; I believe all was done that was possible in the circumstances. The clergy and gentry of all denominations, with merchants and men of business, co-operated most harmoniously in the work of procuring food for the starving. Relief committees were formed, and money subscribed most liberally; and appeals were sent to Britain and America which were largely and generously responded to. But then there were not the facilities of transit which now exist. There was no steam communication with America, and not a mile of railway in Connaught. It took a long time to arrange for sending out the orders

* His first marriage, to Miss Teresa C. Smith, daughter of Dr. Smith, Ballina.

for food, and a longer time to collect the supplies at the ports and ship them to Ireland. Then, too, while seaport towns were relieved, the remote districts were badly off. The food had to be sent by horse and cart for many long miles, so that the interior parts of the country necessarily suffered more in proportion.

In Ballina, at an early period, the Relief Committee was in full and vigorous operation. The Episcopal clergyman, the Roman Catholic priest, and myself, were joint secretaries, and were thoroughly sustained by our fellow-townsmen of all creeds and classes. The town was divided into districts, which were periodically visited by the members of Committee. The scenes thus witnessed were horrible and heartrending. On one occasion I, in company with a respectable merchant, a member of the well-known Dillon family, visited our district. In every house was want and woe. In one wretched cabin we saw some twenty-five men, women, and children huddled together on rotten straw, of whom half were dead, and the remainder met the same fate ere the night was over. My kind friend distributed his money with a free hand, and on giving up the work for the day, he said : ' I gave yesterday my subscription of five pounds. Here is a cheque for twenty-five pounds, on condition you never require me to go through such a harrowing work as that of to-day.' How I was enabled to do it I can hardly now understand. The sight of gaunt and hunger-bitten poor creatures in the streets by day was shocking, and at night their cries were so heartrending that I removed my sitting-room from the front to the rear of the house, if so I might shut out the piteous sounds. As I have said, the ordinary decency of burial was neglected. For instance, one day I saw a man carry the body of his wife, wrapped in a sheet, and, scraping a hole in the old Abbey Graveyard, he deposited her remains. This practice became so frequent that the Relief Committee got the ground covered over with heaps of earth, carted in, in order to prevent the inevitable plague arising from the multitude of decomposing corpses.

Blame has been attached to the Government for not

being more early and energetic in giving the much-required help. I do not altogether adopt such views. The Government may have been slow to move in the first instance, but when the melancholy facts became known, they did, in my humble opinion, all they could. Parliament voted a sum of eight millions of pounds sterling. The efforts of the various relief committees were, therefore, largely supplemented; and, finally, the Government undertook to feed the entire necessitous population, giving a ration of one pound of meal per day to each person—not a very generous dole, but sufficient to stay the cravings of hunger and sustain existence. Some thought the Royal Navy should have been employed in carrying food from foreign ports to ours. I was of a different opinion, and believed that the wiser and more expeditious course was adopted in encouraging commercial enterprise to render that service. The event showed the propriety of this course, as food was provided more quickly and distributed more extensively than the Government could have done.

British benevolence contributed munificently, to the amount of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Among the many charitable associations organized in every part of England and Scotland, that of the Society of Friends deserves special notice. Not only did they send large quantities of food and clothing, but many came personally, not merely to visit and see for themselves, but individually to engage in the arduous work of administering the relief. It was my good fortune to come into close and intimate relations with several of these truly benevolent Christians. One of them, particularly, was well known for his tenderness of heart and deep sympathy with the poor. He visited them in their homes, with his own hands giving food to the hungry and clothing to the naked. His son, who acted as his secretary, and worked with his father in self-denying deeds of charity, obtained in later years a high position in Parliamentary and official life—the able, but much-maligned and misrepresented Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Right Hon. W. E. Forster.

Nor was American aid wanting. Contributions came in

money and kind, of which Ballina got its share—directly as well as indirectly. Two ships of war were given by the United States Government to carry the food provided by the people to our shores. Private individuals also sent cargoes of flour, meal, and rice. The husband of a lady who had been born in Ballina, a member of an old and respectable family, sent a cargo for the special benefit of her native town, which came at a most opportune time, and was thankfully acknowledged. Not the least noteworthy of our benefactors was the Rev. Dr. Edgar, of Belfast. His ‘Cry from Connaught,’ in its powerful and pathetic pleading, touched many a heart and opened many a fountain of sympathy and aid. I do not know how many thousands of pounds were entrusted to him as almoner, but they amounted to a very considerable sum. The moneys received by him were sent with impartiality to clergy of all denominations, gentry, and others. The ladies were largely made the agents of distributing his grants. Nor did he confine his philanthropic efforts to the rescuing the poor from starvation and the grave. He awoke the attention of the Church to the spiritual need of a people perishing for lack of knowledge, and, by originating the Scriptural and industrial schools, and other agencies, largely contributed to the promotion of the true welfare of that province, whose interests were so dear to his heart.

CHAPTER III

I HAVE referred to the united and earnest efforts of the various classes of the community in relieving the abounding distress. One section I omitted to notice—namely, the landlords. This class has of late received a large amount of censure, and been made to suffer, not only for the sins of the present generation, but also for those of their fathers. I have not hesitated when occasion served, and to their face, to point out their grievous errors and harsh and high-handed dealings with their tenantry. But let justice be done. As a rule, in the famine years the landlords did their duty. They took a leading part in the administration of relief. Many, doubtless, did desert their posts, and joined the ranks of the absentees, and others who remained were indifferent or heartless. Yet the majority proved themselves worthy of their position by that kind sympathy and self-denying effort which were well appreciated by those conversant with the circumstances. If their pecuniary help was not very large, or in proportion to their nominal income, they were not to be blamed. They were receiving no rents, and did not for years. Their estates were heavily mortgaged, and the demands on them for interest were severe and urgent, leaving little means to support their households or to give in charity. One worthy gentleman told me: ‘My rental till now was £5,000 a year, well paid. I will hand you over my property if you secure to me for life £250 per annum.’ He was one of those who, by exposure to the risk of the diseases which accompanied and followed the famine, fell a victim to the prevailing fever.

The Poor Law system nearly broke down under the pressure. The then Ballina Union extended about sixty miles in length, from Dromore West, in Co. Sligo, to Belmullet, in Erris, there being but one workhouse for the Union, where since there are four. It was an absurd arrangement at any time, but it was fraught with fearful consequences during the period now being noticed. First of all, the Ballina Workhouse, built to accommodate 1,200 persons, was overcrowded. Then what were called Auxiliary Houses were provided, some of them new erections, others the stores which, under the old system, were to be found in many places,* where the grain was deposited waiting for vessels to convey the produce to Britain. These were now empty, and were utilized for the reception of the poor. In them lay a vast number of impotent folk, whose gaunt and wasted frames and ghastly, emaciated faces were too evident signs of the sufferings they had endured. The little boys and girls presented a hideous sight. In many instances, their heads had become bald and their faces wrinkled like old men and women of seventy or eighty years of age. Some had even the aspect of semi-savages, showing how, in process of time, even a civilized people might, through privation and suffering, degenerate into an inferior type of humanity.

In the latter end of 1846 Government started relief works, the principal of which were draining of the land and making of roads. Many thought the people would have been better employed cultivating their own farms, or in some reproductive work. But the laws of political economy forbade. Winter had set in before the preliminary engineering and other arrangements were completed. The people were then reduced to a condition of emaciation and weakness. Often they made their way to the place of working with no small difficulty, and the amount of labour they could accomplish was very little indeed. The pay-clerks weekly gave the workers the earnings to

* In Killalee every corn-store was occupied. It was sad to see faces, tier above tier at every little window, trying to look out, and thus gain some little amusement from seeing the passers-by.

which they were entitled. Sometimes their arrival was delayed, and they came too late to save life. Inquests were occasionally held, and no uncommon verdict was that of murder or manslaughter against the pay-clerk or the Prime Minister of the day, Lord John Russell. After a huge expenditure of public money, little was seen in return but extensive tracts of earthworks, intended as the foundation of roads which were never completed.

It is hard to say which was more demoralizing, the gratuitous distribution of food and money, or employment on what the workers knew well enough was utterly useless. I have had considerable experience during many years of both methods, for periodical seasons of 'distress' have occurred since the famine, though not so extensive or severe. Labour as a test of destitution is right enough, but there is a difficulty in providing work suitable and profitable. Mere gratuitous help on anything like a large scale tends to degrade and demoralize the recipients.

When the Government undertook to feed the people, the Ballina Relief Committee resolved to suspend operations. We had then about £1,000 on hands, and the question arose, How should this be expended? As gratuitous relief was no longer needed, the idea was entertained of giving some *industrial* employment. Part of the Committee advocated agricultural labour, and to have a model farm—a very desirable thing in a region where agriculture was in a very rude state. The majority, of whom I was one, adopted another plan. There had been in the town and some country places a number of weavers. Several of these were Roman Catholics who had fled from the north in the troublous times at the beginning of the present century. It was thought this industry might be revived. Accordingly, one of the grain stores was rented, and called and known under the rather pretentious title of 'The Factory.' An intelligent young man, thoroughly acquainted with the trade, was brought from Belfast, and weaving began briskly. A damask loom was set up, and it was fashionable to purchase tablecloths, which were certainly of an excellent make and finish. Some of these are still in existence.

But it did not pay. The cost of bringing the raw material, the yarn, from Belfast, and of sending the webs to the market, along with the impossibility of the hand-loom competing with the power-loom, made the enterprise end in failure. It was also evident that a combination of work and charity does not do. So, finding our capital rapidly diminishing, the project was abandoned, and the remnant of the money distributed in blankets and coal during one winter of peculiar inclemency. The Ballina Relief Committee thus closed its career.

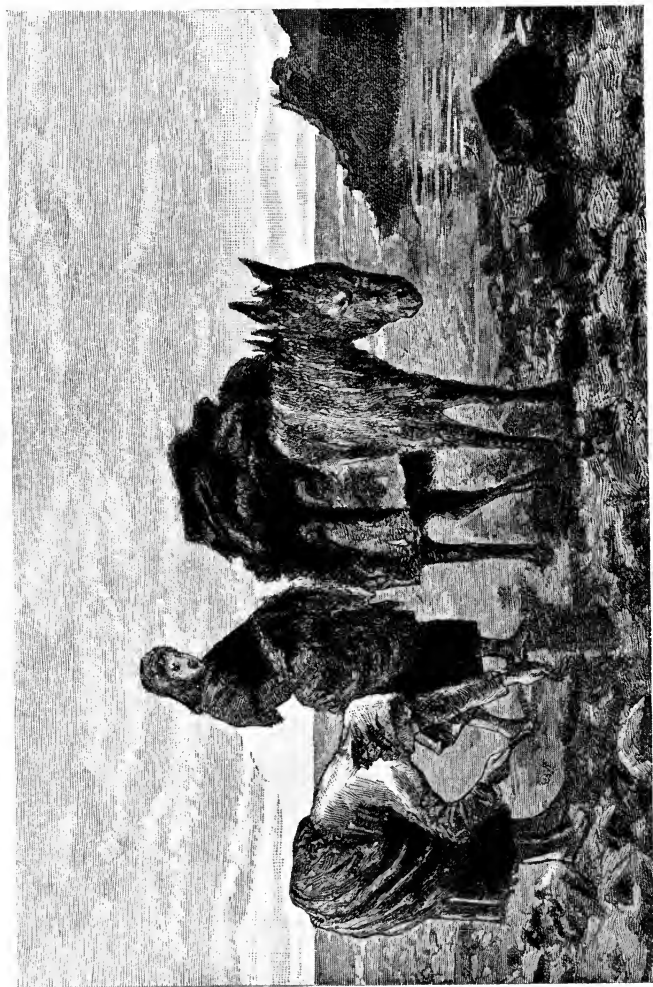
In recalling the proceedings of this Committee, I cannot but record my agreeable recollection of the harmony and goodwill and hearty co-operation of all its members. The chairman, Colonel, afterwards Sir Arthur Knox Gore, Bart., a most able and practical man ; the rector, the Rev. Joseph Verschoyle, not marked by high talent, but kindly and courteous ; his curate, the Rev. Joseph Kinkead, an eloquent preacher and diligent minister of the Gospel ; the Rev. Hugh Conway (died 1892), then Roman Catholic Administrator of the Parish, now, as I write, Bishop of the Diocese ; and many others, professional men, doctors, lawyers, and merchants—these met to plan and work, animated with one common purpose, and with one heart to relieve the abounding wretchedness. I do not think there was at any time a serious difference among us. If any, it was on mere matters of detail, and caused no bad feeling. The questions of religion or politics, though outside conflicting views on both subjects sometimes caused sharp collision, yet in the committee-room found no place. We came together, and parted as gentlemen and Christian philanthropists. As an evidence of the good impressions left on all, many years after, at a time of severe distress and suffering, the Roman Catholic Bishop proposed me as president of another Relief Committee, which honour I of course declined in his favour ; but I was unanimously appointed vice-chairman. Of that committee of 1846 he and I are the solitary survivors, and we still cherish mutually the good opinions formed by each of the other's qualities.

The events of the Committee were usually of a sad

character—the consideration of the starving poor, how best to procure the needful funds, and how efficiently to meet the necessities of the case. Occasionally, topics of another and even of a ludicrous nature came up. On one occasion a man who had been a recipient of relief applied for a second ration. It appeared that he had got married on the calculation that his young wife would thus be supported. As marriages, hitherto so frequent, had entirely ceased, the additional ration was unanimously and cordially voted.

There was no small difficulty in getting people to use the Indian meal, now for the first time introduced into the country. The first day it was distributed there was tremendous excitement. From want of knowledge, the cooks had turned out the porridge without having it sufficiently boiled. It had the appearance of sawdust in water. The people, imagining they were going to be poisoned, began to assault the officials and threaten the Committee. I had been reading on the subject, and saw where the fault lay. I calmed the people by ordering the stuff to be thrown out, and told them to leave and return at a certain hour, when proper food would be provided for them. The creatures gave me cheers, and left quite content. I then directed the meal to be put again in the boilers and properly cooked. At the appointed time the people came back, and were supplied with the selfsame food, which was both palatable and nutritious. They were quite satisfied, and the Indian meal was henceforth the staple food of the community.

The accompanying sketch represents a scene still familiar enough on certain parts of the Irish coast. It, however, awakens sad memories in connection with the famine time in Connaught. Ordinarily, the seaweed is laboriously gathered off the rocks ; sometimes it requires to be carried up steep and dangerous paths, whence it is conveyed to the fields to be used as manure. So great was the destitution in 1846 that many made use of the seaweed as an article of food, in the absence of proper and more suitable provisions.



SEAWEED GATHERERS.

[To face page 16.]

CHAPTER IV

THE famine was accompanied and followed by pestilence. Both fever and dysentery were regular epidemics, and multitudes thus perished. This was in one sense worse than the famine, for it affected all classes, the rich as well as the poor. The Rev. Mr. Kinkead, one of our secretaries, fell an early victim, and others of the clergy and laity caught the fever when visiting the poor. Fever sheds were erected, but these soon became as overcrowded as the Workhouse. The medical men did their duty nobly, attending the patients in their own cabins with self-denying zeal. But such was the dread of contagion that numbers were left by friends and neighbours without care and attention. Many families perished without a helping hand. When dead, the neighbours buried them by pulling down the roofs of their cabins—perhaps the best mode of sepulture in the circumstances, as the spread of the disease was so far prevented.

Emigration was the resort and refuge of many. The cross-channel steamers were crowded, and the manufacturing towns of Britain replenished to excess by those who were flying from hunger. Others, whose little means had not been exhausted, or who were assisted by friends already in America crossed the Atlantic, and in Canada, but chiefly in the United States, found a means of livelihood. Entire parishes became almost depopulated. The places of worship that once were crowded were emptied. Farms over the country were unoccupied, the deserted homes presenting a dreary and affecting aspect. The walls, instead of being thrown down, were left to stand as melan-

choly signs of the widespread desolation. The population of the towns was also greatly diminished, and long ranges of crumbling ruins in the suburbs occupied the place where once were crowded, if not very comfortable, dwellings. Ballina did not suffer proportionately as much as Castlebar or Westport and other Western towns. But in one section of it, called Ardnaree, in the Sligo side of the Moy, the inhabitants were reduced from 1,600 in 1841 to 500 in 1851. Over the whole country the diminution was remarkable. The census of 1841 gave a population of 8,175,124. At the same rate of increase of previous periods the population should at least have been 9,000,000 in 1851. It was found to be only 6,515,794. In other words, the decrease in five years was 2,500,000. Of this the famine destroyed 1,000,000, the remainder—1,500,000—were removed by emigration. I cannot give the exact statistics of my part of the country, but its share was to the full as much as any other part of the island.

In accounting for the decrease of the population, besides famine, fever, and emigration, an important factor to be dealt with is what is called 'The Clearing System.' The holdings of the tenantry were very small, and the enlarging of the farms most desirable, both for the sake of owner and occupier. This had been felt for some time, but the tenacity with which the peasantry clung to the soil presented an apparently insurmountable obstacle. The famine period provided an opportunity which was largely taken advantage of. Much of the land had been vacated by death or emigration; still, much remained in the occupation of the holders. Recourse was then had to eviction, and there would have been wisdom in this course if carried out with kindness and care. Provision should have been made for these humble people to enable them to emigrate with comfort to another land where their toil would be repaid by prosperity and comfort. But, as a rule, this was not done. Entire families were turned out on the roadside without a shelter, sometimes even in the cold and rain of the winter-time. 'The Crowbar Brigade' unroofed the houses and broke down the walls, so that the poor creatures had nothing

to protect them from the inclemency of the weather, even in the ruins of their old homes. This process was carried out on a most extensive scale. Whole townlands were thus cleared out day after day. There was a mania to form large grazing farms, in the hope of constituting a tenantry possessed of capital, and who would be a greater security for the payment of rent.

Had the process been carried on in a much more moderate way, it might have done well. But, apart from the hardships inflicted on those who were so rudely and ruthlessly driven from their dwellings, the overgrown farm system did not prove a success. The grazier or gentleman farmer is all very well, but it would be better for the country at large had a substantial yeomanry been created, who could live in reasonable comfort with their families on farms of a much smaller size than that aimed at by this 'clearing system.' The mode of carrying out clearings was such as to leave a sting of bitterness in the hearts of the evicted, which they carried to other lands, and still rankles in their breasts. I have seen crowds of peasantry, as they were about to take their seats on the long Bianconi car, kneel down in the open street of Ballina, and invoke the direst curses on those who had forced them into exile. 'Going with a vengeance' became a proverb, which subsequently was, with a certain hope and expectation, turned into, 'Coming with a vengeance.'

A young peasant in my neighbourhood had emigrated, but not exactly in the circumstances described, as his father had remained in occupation of the farm. One day a letter came from the son, and as the old man could not read, he brought it to his landlord to read it for him. After the usual preliminaries, the letter goes on: 'Dear father, pay no more rent. I belong to an army of 90,000 Fenians, and we are about to land in Ireland to exterminate the landlords. The first man I will shoot is Captain ——,' the gentleman who was reading the letter, and who did not deserve such a doom, as he was proverbially not only a just and fair, but a kind and indulgent landlord. I knew him well.

A splendid opportunity was at this time presented of settling or colonizing the West of Ireland. Vast tracts were unoccupied and left to waste and desolation, which might have been repeopled with a better class than before, without risk or danger. There were no claimants for the lands, for the former occupiers had disappeared and left no representatives to claim the succession. I urged the landlords to avail themselves of the situation, and they were willing enough. Several came from Ulster and Scotland to explore the country, and found they could readily get lands on very low terms, and at long leases. But one fatal obstacle lay in the way: there were no farm buildings. The Scotchmen would not do without 'a steading,' but they would not expend their capital on stone and lime. The landlords were too poor to provide the requisite structure, and so the project fell through. Some of the gentry who were able to do what was required would not. With a strange infatuation, they dreaded the advent of a race of sturdy and independent men, who would not stand hat in hand to them nor crouch at the office door in subdued servility. They were told by these, 'We will pay a fair rent, but we will not be serfs. We wish to live with our families in decent comfort, in good houses, and in a way such as human beings ought to do,' and so on. This the proud aristocrat could not brook.

I was greatly disappointed. A dream, not a fanciful one, but quite feasible, was dispelled. The chance was gone. Very speedily the population began to increase and multiply with marvellous, yet quite Irish, rapidity. The lands were reoccupied, and the hope of a Protestant settlement of Connaught utterly gone.

Yet some immigrants did arrive—not, indeed, in such great proportions as I had wished for. By these existing congregations were well replenished, and new ones formed, to the number of eight—Creevelea, Boyle, Clogher, Hollymount, Newport, Dromore West, and Ballinglen. Of the settlers, several were practical farmers, who, by their intelligence and industry, have prospered, and have not only done well for themselves, but have done good to the

country, in setting an example of a better state of cultivation, which has been copied by their neighbours with good results. Nor have they been molested or injured. Coming into occupation of lands from which there had not been evictions of the previous tenants, there was no bad feeling towards them of taking land 'over other people's head.' Then, too, acting as they did in a kindly and fair manner with those around, they secured the respect and goodwill of their neighbours. I know many such cases.

Others of the newcomers were of a different stamp and type, such as retired merchants, professional men, bankers and others, who had some capital, but no previous or practical knowledge of farming. They worked by *book*, and were dependent on the guidance of a local Irish manager, who was not always trustworthy, or of a Scotch steward, who often made mistakes as to the conditions of Irish climate and soil. They occupied the deserted mansions of the lord of the soil, and lived rather in some sort of style. These did not prove a success, and, after an interval of gradual declension, went their way to the place whence they came, 'sadder if not wiser men.'

CHAPTER V

DURING this dreary period of famine and its accompanying sorrows I pursued my congregational work to the best of my ability, though without much to cheer or inspire hope. The times were out of joint. Our Scottish friends had nearly all gone. Business was very bad, and the new settlers had not yet come. The congregation was reduced to a skeleton. The stipend shrivelled down to some £20. I would have left, I think, were it not that in August, 1846, my dear mother's prediction was fulfilled, and I had formed a domestic connection which I felt had bound me to the locality. Yet, though I could not see it, there was a light streak in the cloud, and Providence was preparing the way for a revival of our congregational life.

Other events were occurring in connection with the Roman Catholic department of the Mission which gave a new turn to that cause, and ultimately led to most important results. The Rev. Michael Brannigan had been selected by the students as their missionary, and was appointed by the Board of Missions to take the oversight of the Irish schools, and also to act as itinerant missionary over an extensive district, comprising parts of the counties of Mayo and Sligo. He had come and taken up his residence in Ballina as the most convenient place for headquarters, and I was brought into very close and intimate relations with him and his special work. But Mr. Brannigan demands and deserves a distinct and special notice ; and I purpose later to give a sketch of his life and of his operations in Connaught, including an account of the *old* Irish schools.

Meanwhile, there are some matters bearing on the social condition of Connaught which some of my friends have asked me to notice, and they will, I think, be novel to most of my readers, and prove interesting if not also instructive.

An old friend writes from Dublin reminding me of the mode and cost of living at that time. He says : ' You and I had lodgings of two rooms each for £12 or £13 per annum. The best beef was 2d. to 3d. per pound ; eggs, 4d. per dozen ; butter, same price per pound ; turbot, 1s. each ; other fish in proportion. In those days a kid could be had for 10d., and, dressed in a savoury manner, was a favourite dish, and kept one in dinner for a week. Thus, a small income went a long way.' This will account for my undertaking on such limited means the cares and responsibilities of a household. My friend adds : ' Then the country people would run or stand on their heads, or do anything to oblige.' What a change in all these respects ! Facilities of communication have equalized prices over the kingdom, so that a Connaught minister is no better off than any of his brethren. The political movements of later times have also affected the tone and the temper of the peasantry in a very unpleasant way.

There has been a great improvement of late years in the cultivation of the land, though still agriculture is not in such an advanced state as in the eastern and northern provinces. I was struck by hearing a phrase which sounded strange in my ears—namely, ' Striping the land'—that is, giving to each tenant his holding in one place, with his cottage on it, and his farm separated by proper fences from his neighbour. This was necessitated by the wretched system of *rundale* tenure which then largely prevailed. This system has been thus described : ' In some instances a tenant having part of a townland had his proportion in thirty or forty different places, and without fences between them, it being utterly impossible to have any, as the portions were so numerous and so very small that not more than half a stone of oats was required to sow one of those divisions.' Fights, trespasses, and disputes unavoidably resulted, with endless law procedures and consequent

expense. All attempts at improvement were effectually hindered. It is obvious that the one remedy was the 'striping' or squaring of the lands. This also put an end to the clustering of the cottages or cabins in what was dignified by the title of '*villages*,' but really a medley of dirt and disorder.

There were two classes of persons in the community whom I omitted to notice. These are the 'Middlemen' and the 'Gombeens' men. With regard to the former, there was a great lack of the middle class in the proper sense of the term—that is, of men of moderate means, equally removed from the extreme of wealth and luxury on the one hand, and the harassing anxieties of comparative poverty on the other, but combining the intelligence of the higher with the industry of the lower. But there were middlemen in another sense—that is, persons who held, say, a townland or more from the owner, who was usually an absentee, and sublet in small farms to the occupiers of the soil. This was easy for the head landlord, as he had but one person to deal with, but it was injurious to the tenants, as the middleman had to make his profit off them, and accordingly charged exorbitant rents. Moreover, by this system there was no direct relation between the real owner and those living on his property, and he felt relieved of any responsibility about them. The operation was to infinitesimally subdivide the land, and thereby intensify poverty. All, however, went well for the middleman till the famine came. The poor people had no money to pay him, while he was held strictly responsible for the head rents. As a consequence, they were completely ruined, and as a class obliterated. While there were many worthy men among them, this treble ownership was essentially bad, and the extinction of this order of squireens was not to be regretted.

The 'gombeen men' were usurers. The system of borrowing money from loan offices and gombeen men was and is still largely practised, and as the rate of interest was fearfully high, the unfortunate people who had recourse to this mode of raising money were constantly and increasingly embarrassed. These usurers were sometimes of the peasant

class, who, having gathered some amount of money, lent it out at a usurious interest. Shopkeepers also followed the practice, insisting on a portion of the loan being taken in goods, which were given at a high price. The charge say, for a loan of £1 was 1s. for interest, 5d. for the card and IOU, and 1s. for the first instalment, so that the borrower received money or goods to the amount of 17s. 7d. Nineteen shillings were then to be paid in weekly instalments of one shilling each, with a fine of 1d. per week in case of being a defaulter. To these terms must be added the cost connected with bringing in two men as securities, to say nothing of the loss of time to all the parties. The unfortunate borrower had thus to pay, I think, at least 15 per cent. per annum. But the gombeen man, by receiving the weekly payments, and lending out again and again, must have been in receipt on his capital of—well, it would take an *actuary* to calculate it. When the famine came, and the borrowers became penniless, the gombeen man were ruined. I confess to having but small sympathy with these horse-leeches. Unfortunately, there are still some of the same harpies preying on their hapless victims.

CHAPTER VI

FOR ten years prior to 1845 the *Irish* schools were in operation, not only in Connaught, but in the mountains of Tyrone and the glens of Antrim, and in Kerry. They were so termed because the object was to instruct the Irish-speaking people to read the Holy Scriptures in their own loved tongue. It is not to be supposed that there were regular buildings, where during fixed hours children were taught the ordinary branches of education ; but the scholars, of all ages and both sexes, met the teacher in his own house, or in each others' houses, usually at night, after the day's work was over, or on holidays, and on the Sabbath. During the long winter nights little companies were gathered round the blazing bogwood or peat fires, and, by the help of the mountain rushlight, and through summer by the light of the sun in the fields, reading in the Irish Scriptures ' the wonderful works of God.' The teachers were almost exclusively Roman Catholics. The schools were examined three times each year by Irish-speaking inspectors, who knew and professed Gospel truth, and by whom returns were made to the minister superintendent of the progress of the scholars, with their names, ages, and residences. After each inspection a gratuity was awarded to each teacher, varying from 10s. to £2, for the four months, according to the evidence afforded of his diligence, fidelity, and efficiency. Also, when the teachers were assembled to receive their payments, they were examined and instructed by the superintendent ministers on a previously prescribed portion of the Word of God, and on some leading doctrine of the

Gospel. Free conversation, or even discussion, was invited and encouraged. This simple, if not rude agency resulted in much fruit. Not a few teachers and scholars renounced the errors of the system in which they had been born, and made open profession of the reformed faith.

In connection with these schools, *Irish* Scripture-readers were employed. They were not colporteurs (for that was an unknown agency), but merely Scripture-readers who expounded and explained, as opportunity served, the plain truths of the Gospel in a style of thought and illustration adapted to the capacity of the people. Not only the frequenters of the schools, but others who could not or would not learn, had an open door for these men, who found an access to their homes and hearts.

Besides these, a licentiate or student of our Church was a resident in each school district. He assisted the inspector in his work, and exercised supervision over him ; he also held meetings with teachers and scholars for reading and expounding the Scriptures, with catechetical instruction and prayer, aiming more or less directly at their conversion, not to a sect, but to Jesus Christ as the one Mediator, 'able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.'

I had an opportunity of becoming personally conversant with this work, especially after the arrival of Mr. Brannigan, whom I accompanied in his tours ; and though not an adept in speaking Irish, I could read it with some ease. I also took part in addressing the teachers assembled for examination in Ballina, Castlebar, Dromore West, and elsewhere. The exact number of teachers in Mayo and Sligo I cannot now recall, but I think they counted up some 200, while the scholars were several thousands.

This system had many excellencies, and was adapted to the time and the circumstances of the country, but it was far from perfect, and not free from abuses in its working. While many of the teachers became spiritually enlightened, yet they were all on their appointment Roman Catholics. From the nature of the schools, proper inspection was hardly practicable, and there was reason to fear that some of the

returns were inaccurate. Then the famine wrought havoc with the attendance, and the spread of national and other schools made the English the vernacular of the rising generation, and hastened the decay of the Irish tongue. Hence, the old system was gradually brought to an end, and ceased entirely in 1854. Meanwhile, a new and better one, more suited to the altered condition of the country had been formed. The former had done its work, and, having served its day and generation, gave place to what is well known as the Connaught Scriptural and Industrial schools.

It is well here to mention the curious fact that in Ulster the Irish schools of Tyrone owed their origin to the circumstance of a beggar having found an Irish Testament by the wayside; so those of Connaught may be traced to a Bible which an English sportsman presented to a peasant. This Bible soon came into great request in a district where nothing of the kind had previously been seen. One after another borrowed the wonderful Book, and neighbours gathered round the winter hearth to listen to its marvellous tales of the love and life of the Son of God. It is said that three connections of the man who first got the Bible were savingly converted.

As stated in a previous chapter, the Rev. Michael Branigan was selected by the students and appointed by the Board of Missions to take the oversight of these Irish schools, and act as itinerant missionary in Mayo and Sligo. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Tyrone, and arrived in Ballina in December, 1845. He was a Roman Catholic by birth, a native of a mountainous part of Co. Tyrone. His father was a small farmer, and, like himself, a teacher under the old Irish school system. As his duty in this capacity was to instruct the scholars in the Irish language, the text-book being the Bible, he thereby became thoroughly conversant with the Word of God, and soon doubts began to arise in his mind as to the Church of Rome being in accordance with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. His mental struggles were very great and distressing. In his agony of spirit, he went to the Rev.

Robert Allen, of Stewartstown, who exercised a general superintendence over the Irish schools in Co. Tyrone. His preaching made a great impression on the young man, but ere the service was over he was seized with a severe sickness, and had to leave the church. Mr. Brannigan looked on this as a punishment from God for entering a heretic place of worship, and resolved never to do so again. Mr. Allen sought him out and ministered to his requirements, and manifested such a kindly interest in him that his heart became quite softened. They had some religious conversation, the subjects being naturally connected with the Romish controversy. Amongst other texts quoted by Mr. Allen was Acts iv. 12—‘Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ This greatly impressed him ; but he replied, ‘That is the Authorized Version.’ Mr. Allen said, ‘I have not a copy of the Douay Testament in the house, but here is the price of one, which you can procure in Cookstown.’ Mr. Brannigan at once set out, and made the remarkable resolve that, if the text was the same in the Douay as in the Authorized Version, he would become a Protestant. Asking for the Book, before paying for it he turned to the passage, and found it identical with the other, word for word. This was the turning-point in his spiritual history. Step by step he went on. He was taken up by some Christian ladies, educated, and sent to Belfast College. After two sessions of Divinity under Dr. Edgar, he went to Edinburgh, which was then a great centre of attraction to our students, owing to the stirring events in the disruption of the Church of Scotland, as well as from the great name and fame of Dr. Chalmers. I was a class companion of his for one session in the Free Church Divinity Hall, and he now arrived in Connaught to carry on that school system whose agency had been so blessed in his own case.

Mr. Brannigan’s labours were most abundant. Endowed with a fine physical frame and no small intellectual abilities, he worked with an energy and perseverance which might shame many. No distance, however great, and no weather,

however wild and inclement, would be allowed to interfere with his work. On Sabbaths and weekdays he visited the various stations and schools from Dromore West, in Co. Sligo, to Belmullet, in the remote region of Erris, in Co. Mayo. In 1846 twelve regular missions stations were established for the preaching of the Gospel. He founded two new congregations—Ballinglen and Dromore West. On the appointment of Rev. Robert Allen to the superintendence of the Connaught Schools, Mr. Brannigan was directed to confine his labours more immediately to the Ballinglen district. He soon gathered in a number of adherents, who presented a memorial in 1848, praying to be taken under the care of the General Assembly. He collected the funds required for the erection of a church which was opened, free of debt, in 1850 by the Rev. Dr. Cooke, of Belfast.

In the course of his work Mr. Brannigan was exposed to many hardships. Wet and weary, he had often to put up for the night in very humble cabins, with the additional discomfort of damp beds. To anticipate a little, he was in consequence seized with a severe illness, which brought him to the verge of the grave. Though spared in life, the effects of the disease continued. His upright form became bowed, and he never regained his wonted health and strength. During the crisis of his illness I was in constant attendance, and had many most interesting conversations with him which left a deep and indelible impression as to the purity of his motives, the genuineness of his conversion, and of his sure and strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his only and all-sufficient Saviour. In the immediate prospect of eternity, he bore such a testimony and manifested such a spirit, that nothing could alter or modify my confidence in him as a man and a Christian. He was a thorough Irishman, with some peculiarities; but he 'was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,' and through his instrumentality 'much people was added unto the Lord.'

It has been already stated, but it is needful and desirable to repeat and emphasize the fact, that Mr. Brannigan was the *students'* missionary, selected and appointed by them.

As I am informed, the Students' Missionary Society originated in prayer-meetings held in Fisherwick Place School-room. It was composed of such men as John Hall, T. Y. Killen, Lowry Berklye, Hamilton Magee, Matthew Kerr, John Barnett, John H. Orr, John Mecredy, and others of like stamp. Mr. (now Dr.) Magee acted as secretary. They were imbued with an earnest, evangelistic spirit, and resolved to support at least one missionary. Deeply concerned for the welfare of their own beloved land, they selected Connaught as the field of operations. And so it may be said that the Irish Mission—at least, in its present form—owes its origin to the students. Not only was Mr. Branigan sent by them, but a few years after, Mr. Barnett was appointed their first missionary to Clogher. Further still, most of the above-named, with others, came to Connaught, and were settled as pastors in different places. In December, 1852, twelve ministers met in the heart of Co. Leitrim to ordain a minister, Mr. Ashmore, as pastor of the newly-elected congregation of Creevelea, and Mr. Robinson to the Camlin Mission Station. No fewer than eight of the twelve had been fellow-students, and had prayed and laboured together for their country's welfare. Though I was not a Belfast Divinity student, I thoroughly sympathized with their feelings on such an interesting and affecting occasion, when so far were realized their aspirations and hopes.

In one of his tracts Dr. Edgar wrote : ' Our Connaught Mission has a *glory* round it as a *students' mission*—begun, managed, supplied with men and means, by our own students.' Has the glory departed? Would that the Students' Missionary Society did return to its first love !

CHAPTER VII

IN the autumn of 1846 the Rev. Dr. Edgar, of Belfast, and the Rev. Robert Allen, of Stewartstown, arrived in Ballina on the invitation of Mr. Brännigan to visit the mission field. Dr. Edgar was a convener of the Irish Mission, a cause in which Mr. Allen had been long and deeply interested. On the day after their arrival the teachers of the old Irish schools were collected in the room I occupied for public worship. They gave in reports of their work, and were examined. There were 107 teachers present, having 5,000 pupils under instruction. In the course of the week Dr. Edgar and Mr. Allen visited the schools, and examined the scholars as well as the teachers. The Doctor was greatly pleased. He himself records that 'in the whole of a long examination on the sense and doctrine of the Bible, I was not only gratified with the good conduct, good sense, and proficiency of the pupils, but surprised by the fact that there was not one stupid creature, not one blockhead among them.'

At the close of the examination in Ballina the teachers called the Doctor's attention to the calamity then impending. The potato crop was blighted, though as yet the full truth had not been realized, and no appeal was as yet made to the public for help. These men, however, knew full well how matters were, and were likely to be. They besought him to save them and theirs from death, for the famine was already sore in the land. He told them he was 'the son of a man who in the days of fierce party spirit had suffered not a little for having on his tongue the law of kindness for poor Romanists, and that if they would furnish

a statement of their case he would found on it an appeal to the public.' But as each day supplied fresh proofs of the rapid and alarming spread of famine, he did not wait for the statement, but on the following Sabbath morning, before going to preach, wrote in the Mullaferry Manse that celebrated tract, 'A Cry from Connaught : Appeal for a Land that fainteth by Reason of a Famine of Bread and of hearing the Words of the Lord.' This was followed by another tract—'Connaught, Spiritual and Temporal : The Cry Heard.' On his return to the North, he succeeded in forming an association on behalf of Connaught, consisting of ladies belonging to different denominations of the Christian Church. Their aim and object was not merely to provide food for the hungry, but to promote industrial and Scriptural education amongst the poor females of Connaught. The idea was to 'foster a spirit of independence, to help them to help themselves, to give what no mere charity could give—industrial habits.' The sewed muslin trade was then in a most flourishing state, and had in employment large numbers of females in Ulster. In Connaught there was no suitable employment for women.

In the words of Dr. Edgar, 'In Ulster the pupils to be taught the sewing of muslin would have been expert at their needle, trained to industry, acquainted with its advantages, and accustomed to order. Alas for poor Connaught girls ! they had no opportunities, no manufactures, no inducement to industry. Truly they could say, "No man hath hired us." With the exception of outdoor work, such as harrowing and carrying manure and turf, like beasts of burden, they had scarcely any employment—none remunerative. The testimony of our patronesses is that many of the pupils never had a needle in their fingers, and knew nothing of the use of a thimble !'

Accordingly, teachers were obtained in the North of Ireland, and sent to the West to give instruction to the young girls in this industry. The children were paid for the work according to its value. This constituted a great attraction, and hundreds crowded to the school to be taught. Along with the industrial teaching a good secular and

religious instruction was given. The Holy Scriptures were regularly read, large portions committed to memory, and the children delighted to learn and to sing Psalms and hymns and sacred songs. The object was not to make proselytes to a sect, but to bring souls to the Saviour, and the Lord abundantly blessed this work of faith and labour of love.

Along with these schools, which were of an undenominational character, others of the same kind were established in connection with the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Branigan took the lead in this. He secured the aid of friends in Scotland and in Ireland. Ladies' associations were formed. The first, I believe, were in Dublin and Glasgow, but they were extended over Ulster. The schools so increased in number and attained such importance that they were formally recognised by the Church, and the Rev. Robert Allen, of Stewartstown, was released from his charge, and appointed superintendent of the Connaught Scriptural and Industrial Schools, taking up his residence in Ballina with his family, making it, as it naturally was, the centre of the missionary operations in Connaught. I was asked to join in this good work, which I cheerfully did. At the suggestion of Dr. Edgar and Mr. Allen, I removed from the room hitherto occupied for preaching, as it was available only on the Sabbath, and rented a suitable house, which was used as a schoolroom during the week and for public worship on the Lord's Day. A teacher was employed who was skilled in plain sewing and knitting, as well as in the various branches of elementary English education. Her salary was the modest sum of £12 per annum, but it was then the day of small things. The place was speedily crowded. The Word of God was daily read and explained. There was no attempt at sectarian proselytism, but every rightful effort was made to imbue the minds of the pupils with those Scriptures which are able to make children wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus. In the literary and religious department I had valuable aid from a Christian lady. Miss Banks was English by birth, but had conducted for several years a high-

class ladies' school in Edinburgh, and was a member of the Rev. Dr. Moody Stuart's church. She had accumulated some money, and, giving up her educational establishment in Edinburgh, resolved to devote herself and her means for the benefit of poor Connaught. She resided with me for a time, and took daily the active superintendence of my humble school. Her combined firmness and gentleness, lady-like manners, and Christian zeal secured her influence over the pupils. Her love of order and neatness was powerful for good, and produced corresponding effects on the girls, who, indeed, had not been accustomed to such habits. She was loving and earnest, especially in the religious instruction, and sought with her whole heart to bring the young ones to trust in the Lord Jesus as their only Saviour. After a time Miss Banks removed to another part of the kingdom. She had some peculiarities, which led her to prefer a distinct and separate work for herself. We parted on the most friendly terms, and ever cherished a mutual Christian regard. She went to the wilds of Kerry, where, in a remote and isolated region, she built a school-house and residence for herself. For some years she lived and laboured there amid many difficulties and hardships.

She has long since passed to her rest and reward. In appreciation of her devotion to the cause of Ireland, a few of her lady friends formed an association to carry on her work. For some years the school was continued under the supervision successively of the Rev. Dr. Irwin, now of Castlerock; the Rev. Alexander Dobbin, now of Boardmills; and the Rev. J. S. Gass, afterwards of Clones.

Eventually the school was given up, and it was considered in the altered state of the country more advisable to maintain a colporteur instead.

Dr. Edgar was deeply impressed and saddened by the fact that in some of the districts he visited there had been a number of Presbyterian settlers, most of whom had merged into the surrounding population. In 'The Cry from Connaught' he gave vent to his feelings in the eloquent and impassioned burst, 'God of my fathers! (I might have cried amidst old Presbyterian graves) hast thou none in

Presbyterian Ireland or in the Free Church of Scotland to take up the mantle of the faithful minister who in days of primitive zeal carried around this district, so desolate now, the consolations of the Gospel of God? Is there not one to bind on his belt the copy of the Irish Bible, still preserved, which this old patriarch carried, as from house to house he told the tale, oft repeated, yet ever new, that there is only one safe way into eternity, one rod and staff of comfort in death, one companion of the way who can give the charm of society to death, and light up the darkness of the grave—and that companion is Jesus! By the good hand of the Lord upon us, the Irish Presbyterian Church has a man in every respect qualified for such a sphere; and had she estimated aright his worth in her own and her Master's interests, she would long since have dedicated him to a work for which he is so eminently qualified. It is a subject of hearty congratulation that he is willing to devote a portion of his time to the management of the Assembly's Irish schools, and it remains now to provide for him the men and the means for occupying a field which a generous Providence offers.'

The reference here is to the Rev. Robert Allen, of Stewartstown, subsequently the first superintendent of the Connaught schools. Of him and his work, more in a subsequent chapter.

Tidings have lately come of the death of a dear friend, once a Connaught missionary, the Rev. John Wilson. In a former chapter I mentioned the fact that the Irish Mission in Connaught owed its crigin to the Students' Missionary Society in Belfast, by whom the Rev. Michael Brannigan had been appointed as their first missionary, and afterwards the Rev. John Barnett, to Clogher. Besides these, later on Mr. Wilson, eldest son of the Rev. James Wilson, of Lecumpher, was sent by them in the year 1858 to Castlerea, in Co. Roscommon, where he acted as missionary and superintended the schools in that locality. On the removal of the minister of Killala to Queensland, who was also a John Wilson, but no relation of his namesake, the people gave him a cordial call, and he was ordained to the pastorate

of the congregation, and as missionary in the district on December 31, 1862. The duties thus incumbent on him he realized with a full sense of their solemn responsibilities, and discharged them with singular fidelity. Besides the ordinary congregational services, he sedulously maintained the preaching stations, and saw that the mission schools were kept in full efficiency.

In every department of his work he was painstaking and conscientious. His upright character and amiable disposition secured the respect and regard of all, both of his own congregation and of the general community. By his efforts the church buildings were renovated and improved, and a neat and commodious manse erected. The moneys required for both were mainly raised by himself, and he left them entirely free of debt. A house to be used as a school and lecture-hall was erected in the town of Killala, mainly under the auspices and by the aid of Dr. Edgar. Here, evening services were conducted on the Sabbath and weekdays, as the church itself at Mullaferry is three miles from the town.

Mr. Wilson was of a rather retiring disposition, and, while doing his full share of public and congregational work, did not care to put himself in a prominent position before the public. His were 'the annals of a quiet life.' He actively promoted the interests of the Hibernian Bible Society, and in seasons of privation and distress joined with the clergy and members of other churches in relieving the wants of the poor. In his own church his pulpit services were instructive and forcible, his preaching being based on the old sound theology in which he had been trained, while his appeals to the conscience and heart were earnest and effective. As a pastor he was very diligent, attending particularly to the Scriptural education of the young in the weekday and Sabbath schools. His ministrations from house to house and attention to the sick and afflicted, with his wise and loving counsels to all who needed them, were highly appreciated.

In 1869 he married the only daughter of the well-known and greatly-respected Dr. Nielson, of Killala, who co-

operated with him heartily in his work, and was truly a helpmeet for him. Possessed of no small literary ability, she has given through the press several excellent publications, chiefly relating to the temperance question, a cause for which she was deeply concerned, and which she advocated on all possible occasions with much power and effect.

After acting as a Connaught minister and missionary for twenty-two years, he received a call to his native congregation of Lecumpher, where he was installed in December, 1884. He succeeded there a younger brother, the Rev. Thomas K. Wilson, and was the fourth of the family who ministered in that well-known place, the father and grandfather of these brothers having previously occupied it, so that the Wilson family were associated with that congregation for a period of ninety-five years. Mr. Wilson was not what might be called a strong and robust man. For some time he was in delicate health, his throat and chest being affected. During the early part of the year 1890 he was manifestly getting worse, though his death was not anticipated. He preached on the Sabbath, March 23, and went on Monday to visit some friends in Magherafelt, where he was suddenly seized with acute pains in the back. He gradually succumbed, and died on the following Friday. His latter end was peaceful and triumphant. He leaves a widow and two daughters to mourn the loss of a dearly-beloved and attached husband and father. But they 'do not mourn as those who have no hope,' and they look for comfort and provision to Him who has said, 'Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive : and let thy widows trust in Me.'

CHAPTER VIII

DURING the following year, known as 'The Black 'Forty-Seven,' Dr. Edgar paid several visits to Connaught. He partly occupied himself in administering relief to the poor and starving, and partly in organizing his industrial schools. As to the former, he did not confine himself to the Presbyterians as almoners of his bounty. Episcopalians, ladies, rectors, landlords, Roman Catholic priests, and the Bishop himself, got generous help. On one occasion, in handing the Bishop £10, Mr. Brannigan received for himself and the Doctor the Episcopal benediction. Some of the recipients were taken by surprise at the help coming from such an unexpected quarter. A neighbouring rector told me he had got £10 from a man he had never heard of—a Dr. Edgar. I informed him who and what he was. He said: 'When I got the money, I wrote asking (what was certainly in the circumstances an unnecessary question) how it was to be expended.' The Doctor's reply was characteristic: 'Take the first poor man you meet and give him some bread, to prevent the gastric juice eating up his stomach.'

One day, visiting an acquaintance, we saw a couple of huge dogs. The Doctor was indignant, and exclaimed, 'These creatures eat as much as would keep a whole family from starving.'

Among the principal dispensers of Dr. Edgar's bounty was the Rev. David Rodgers, minister of Mullaferry, Killala, and Mrs. Rodgers. It was in his manse that the famous 'Cry from Connaught' was composed, and perhaps this was one reason why he was specially attracted to it.

The congregation was composed chiefly of small farmers, descendants of a colony brought from Co. Donegal by the lord of the soil. For a time they prospered, but at this period they were greatly reduced in means, and suffered from the effects of the potato blight equally with their neighbours. Their wants were now supplied. Through Dr. Edgar's appeals, attention was largely drawn to this locality. Among others, Dr. Chalmers wrote : ' I should like to know the special name and boundaries of the district over which Mrs. Rodgers expatiates. It is indeed a most gratifying fact that there has been no death by starvation within its limits. But,' he further writes, ' do not think, though I am only speaking now of the temporal famine, that I undervalue in the least the exertion you and others are making upon your higher walk. I believe that Ireland will never get above its difficulties but by dint of that pure evangelism which hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life that is to come.'

These words were written a very short time before his death, and thereon Dr. Edgar suitably remarks : ' I wish it to be part of practical knowledge all over the land of Chalmers, and of deep and generous sympathy in every heart which loves his name, that one of the last triumphs of his pen, one of the last openings of his generous hand, and one of the last anxieties of his great warm heart, was on behalf of Connaught. Let his influence on behalf of Connaught live in Christian hearts, though his spirit is above the sky, and let those who would immortalize his memory give perpetuity to his generous zeal for those of whom he travailed in birth to save. For the greatest reformer of modern times, the honoured champion of truth and of liberty, I claim a monument in no marble column, no storied urn or animated bust, but in a living and life-giving system of united missionary enterprise by the Scotch and Irish Presbyterian Churches, on behalf of that lone, oppressed, and afflicted province to which a Chalmers gave so much of his last energy, his last charity, his last prayers.'

As having been a student in Dr. Chalmers' Divinity class, I was deeply affected by his sympathy with the

temporal and spiritual condition of the province wherein my lot had been cast. The aspiration for a united missionary enterprise by the Scotch and Irish Presbyterian Churches, not merely for Connaught, but for all Ireland, has to some extent been realized, and it has been and is my privilege to lend my humble efforts in its behalf, though I regret that on neither side of the Channel as yet do the Churches appear sufficiently alive to the urgent needs of our country, nor do they put forth their energies in a way at all commensurate with the requirements of the case.

Dr. Edgar was not the first, and I may add, not the greatest, Presbyterian minister and missionary who visited Mullaferry. Fourteen centuries previously St. Patrick preached there with power and effect. He himself tells that in a dream he 'had heard the voice of those who were near the woods of Foclud, which is by the Western Sea,' calling on him to come for their help. This Foclud is generally regarded as the same place as Mullaferry, which means 'The Hill of the Meeting-place.' In his tour through Connaught, St. Patrick came to this hill, and, according to tradition, 12,000 persons, including the King and seven princes, his sons, were converted and baptized. The King's name was Awley, whence the name of the barony Tirawley—'the County of the Awleys.'

To revert for a little to the state of the country in the year of the 'Black'Forty-Seven,' one noticeable and doleful fact is that the land was largely let go out of cultivation. The peasants were too weakened by the pressure of the famine, and too poor to provide seed for the soil. Hence, there was little or no crop in Connaught in the autumn. The prospect was very alarming, and measures were taken to remedy the evil. In the spring of 1848 the relief committees resolved to insist that all the recipients of their aid should dig their holdings, under the penalty of withholding the daily dole of meal. When this was done, the committee, on the same conditions, required the people to sow their fields, supplying to each a quantity of seed corresponding to the extent of his holding. The Society of

Friends and others largely contributed for this purpose. Both grain and green crops were thus secured. Turnips, mangolds, and other green crops had hitherto been almost unknown to the Connaught farmers—at least, in the parts with which I was familiar. One good result of the famine was the introduction of these, and consequently improved methods of agriculture.

At this time and subsequently the poor-rates were enormously increased—at least, nominally; in some unions they more than equalled the rental. An impoverished and starving people could not pay anything. It was manifestly unfair to inflict the huge burden on the better classes, whose means were also sadly diminished; consequently, the Legislature provided that the British Exchequer should be charged with the cost of the administration of the Poor Law—an act at once of necessity and mercy.

At the outset great difficulty and consequent suffering was experienced in getting into the country a sufficient supply of food. There being no telegraphic communication with America, and no steamships, the delay at first was very great. But presently the supplies came in freely, and even to superabundance. Immense quantities of breadstuffs were landed at the various ports by the energy and enterprise of the mercantile community. Ultimately the supply largely exceeded the demand. In consequence, many men of business were ruined; the large profits realized from the early-arrived cargoes had incited them to speculate far too extensively, as the event showed, and Indian corn became a drug in the market. Thousands of tons, some of which had been damaged at sea, were left on the quays or deposited in the stores, only to decompose and rot. It was pitiable to see such quantities of what was once good food left to perish, to be thrown into the sea, or otherwise destroyed.

We had quite a host of visitors of all classes—lay, ecclesiastical, nobility, members of Parliament, and representative men from Britain, America, and the Continent of Europe. Some came as tourists, perhaps to spy

out the nakedness of the land ; others animated with purer, and nobler motives of philanthropy, helped on the work of benevolence. Of the visitors, quite a number were ministers from Scotland—such men as Arnot and Bonar, of Glasgow ; Moody Stuart, of Edinburgh ; and later on the famous missionary to India, Dr. Duff. Of our own General Assembly it will suffice to mention Dr. Johnston, of Belfast, and his venerable father ; also, at a later period, Dr. Cooke. The latter came twice to Connaught—on the first occasion to open Mr. Brannigan's new church in Ballinglen, and the second time to perform the same service for me in Ballina. All these were profoundly affected by the wretched condition of the country, alike in its spiritual and temporal aspects.

NOTE ON CHAPTER VIII

A CONNAUGHT IDYLL*

WHILE memory lasts I can never forget the visit we paid to one poor isolated village in the remote mountain moors of Mayo, where for more than thirty years our Irish Mission has had one of its outposts. It was a beautiful May morning when we started early from The Glen, and we hope it was not incompatible with the official character of our visit if our minds yielded for a moment to the wondrous influences of natural beauty which everywhere surrounded us. From a blue sky birds showered forth rich music, in which mingled the soft notes of the cuckoo. Mountain and moorland stretched before us in all directions, fresh with patches of emerald green, or purple with the scented heather, and dotted over with the humble homesteads of a struggling and industrious community. For the first few miles our road ran parallel with the sea-coast ; and beyond beetling cliffs, which swept from Downpatrick Head westwards as far as the eye could reach, the blue waters of the Atlantic sparkled in the sun, and bore an occasional sail upon their bosom. There is a picturesque ravine just where the road turns away from the

* Extract from the *Christian Irishman*, the Rev. Dr. H. Magee, editor.

sea, and in the shelter of that wild retreat there is a scene which well deserves a passing notice.

A good many years ago a wealthy Englishman, thinking that there were other ways of discharging duty to God and man than a life of fashion or pleasure, conceived the idea of buying a piece of ground in the West of Ireland and of living upon it, in order that he might have an opportunity of doing good to the poor people round about him. His plan took shape, and as we rounded the road, the concrete result rose before us in perfect idyllic form. A spacious cottage-shaped mansion nestles under the brow of a hill embosomed, literally, in masses of laburnum and rhododendron, and surrounded with greenhouses and all other accommodation for an opulent country gentleman. We learnt that the original owner of the little property had gone to his reward, but that his son was now devoting himself to the development of his father's idea, and that the house was the centre of untold blessings to the district.

We were soon in the midst of wild moorland. The road leads to B——, and is now famous as the road which was travelled some months ago by Mr. Balfour, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, and his sister, on their celebrated tour in the West. Their journey, however, was made in the midst of a blinding storm, whilst ours was made in perfect weather. Half-way to B—— we branched off to the right, and proceeded through bog-land which appeared to stretch illimitably in every direction. Leagues upon leagues of virgin bog, where the spade might cut fuel at least twenty feet deep, without let or hindrance, formed now our monotonous outlook. At last we reached the end of our car journey, which covered a distance of eighteen or twenty Irish miles. But the remote village we desired to visit lay a long way off, and the trackless intervening moor could only be crossed on foot. Recent rains had swollen the streams and saturated the bog with water. We found a local guide, who undertook to conduct us in a bee-line to our destination, and we braced ourselves for the journey. For the first fifteen minutes we proceeded admirably, but it then became clear that we should be compelled to resort to very primitive methods of travel if we were to succeed in crossing the wide moor. For a whole hour and a quarter we literally had to wade our way bare-foot, now up to the knees in cold streams, now sinking into soft mud, now cautiously balancing

on pieces of quaking bog, and now treading on little islands of hard moorland covered with the sharp spikes of burnt heather. If anyone wishes thoroughly to know the luxury of a pair of soft woollen socks and a pair of comfortable boots, he will require to make that journey, and then sit down, as we did, at the close of it to perform his toilette on the bank of the clear stream which Nature has kindly provided for the purpose. Beyond this stream lay our much-wished-for village, and there, before our eyes, was the veritable place where, more than thirty years ago, the Rev. John McNaughton planted this remotest outpost of the Irish Mission.

Ten or twelve huts of the rudest description, surrounded by a few acres of reclaimed bog, marked off in stripes for the purpose of ownership, constitute the little mission village. The population consists of about fifty souls, and, with the exception of two other similar villages, which lie respectively at the distance of half a mile and two miles, they are cut off from all the world. Not a road, not even a path, connects them with the highways of mankind. The children have never seen a tree. No postman, or daily newspaper, or evening special edition, disturbs the perfect seclusion of that gray solitude; yet when we arrived there were many signs of life. Blue smoke curled from the huts—for the people, pinched in many things, have plentiful supplies of fuel. We noticed young girls carrying manure in creels on their backs to the stripes of land where spring crops were to be planted. The men were otherwise engaged with spades.

Our first visit, of course, was to our mission school, which is conducted in one of the ordinary houses or huts of the village. There we found our agent busy at work instructing eight boys and girls in the mysteries of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The attendance was much below the average, on account of the spring labour, which drew the boys and girls of all the three villages into the fields. We examined the children, and found that they were carefully taught both in secular and sacred subjects. They knew more about the Gospel and the plain way of salvation than many a child brought up in the fashionable squares of the city. There was one bright little fellow, five or six years of age, who especially attracted my notice. He was much the youngest present, and his square face and well-set eyes were a pleasure to look at. The poor little man had hardly as many rags upon him

as covered his nakedness. He blushed, and drew himself modestly together as I patted his head and asked him to repeat the Lord's Prayer. 'Don't you know the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father, which art in heaven"?' 'Oh yes, sir'; and, after crossing himself, as these Roman Catholic children do, he repeated the whole prayer through. As we afterwards learnt, that little boy was one of a family who had just been evicted from their ancestral hut for non-payment of rent, and there were other little brothers and sisters sheltered by neighbours, who could not come to school for want of clothes! The mission school is literally a light shining in a dark place. There the whole present population have learnt to speak English and to read the Bible. They are all nominal members of the Church of Rome, but there is no chapel for miles. The priest visits only twice a year for the purpose of holding stations and collecting dues. Our teacher and colporteur is everything to them—guide, philosopher, and friend.

After examining the school, we went out into the village to talk to the people, and soon the entire available population were around us. 'Could you not employ donkeys to carry those creels of manure to the fields, and thus save the girls?' I inquired. 'No, sir; we have but two donkeys in the whole village, and they have only recently come.' I thought at first that this was a sly shot at the three clerical deputies. It was not so, however, for they were able to point out the veritable quadrupeds not far distant. 'What sort of potatoes do you grow here?' 'Lumpers,' they said. 'Lumpers! I remember potatoes of that name many years ago in Ulster. Could you not grow potatoes of a finer quality?' 'No, sir; we tried "Protestants" a few years ago, but "Protestants" would not grow in this soil.' 'So you ate them up?' The Rev. John McNaughton was the name held in highest honour amongst this primitive people. He was for many years the landlord of the district, and he practised two cardinal virtues, which of themselves are sufficient to account for his popularity. First, he never asked for rent, and, secondly, he never evicted anyone for its non-payment. If the prayers of a grateful people have, as they believe, any avail for the dead, there can be no doubt concerning the repose of that distinguished benefactor. 'I hope you do not quarrel here amongst yourselves,' I said. A ragged, weather-

beaten man replied that there had not been a fight in the village for years. The schoolmaster also informed us that intemperance had of late years almost become unknown. 'Were you born here?' I inquired of my weather-beaten friend. 'Yes,' he said, 'and my father before me, and my grandfather.' 'Have you any sickness?' I inquired, 'in this pure mountain air?' 'Very little,' he said; 'but my poor boy has not been well for the last year and a half.' 'Is he able to be outside in the sunshine?' 'No; he is in the house, and in bed.' 'What is the matter?' 'We do not rightly know—something in his throat which makes him cough, and he eats very little.' 'Can I see him?' 'Yes, and welcome.' We were taken to the door of a low cabin, from which the smoke was struggling out as best it could. At the far end was a fire, and beside the fire, in a bed, we could see the pale, wasted face of a young man in the last stage of consumption. When he saw us he raised himself on his elbow, and in clear tones saluted us with the words, 'You are welcome, gentlemen.' I came over to the bedside and took his thin hand in mine. Soon the room was full of men and women, and I spoke to him as much as I thought I dare about heaven and Jesus. The tears rolled rapidly down his pale face, and though I did not kneel down to pray, I prayed in my heart that the dear Saviour would have mercy upon this dying youth. I cannot but regret most deeply that we were so cautious, as the teacher afterwards told me I might have knelt by the bedside and offered prayer. He does it regularly, and the people are grateful for it. As we came out of the poor hut, I noticed that the family cow occupied the other end of the room. But what astonished me was that there did not appear to be any incongruity in the arrangement, and the nest seemed to be warmed by affection; and certainly a mother's tears and a son's sickness made the poor spot for ever sacred.

Here, now, is an unknown village, which epitomizes the whole history of human life. Here are little children not without fresh laughter; here are youths that feel the fierce heat of passion, and are visited with their dreams of ambition; here are homes, poor indeed, constructed out of the ordinary materials of love and patience and self-sacrifice; and here, too, has fallen the shadow of class conflict which lies athwart the whole island. You can see that Christ has taught these

humble souls a good deal of His Gospel—gentleness, brotherly kindness, and charity. They are still nominal members of the Roman Communion, but their knowledge, both of things eternal and things temporal, has been all drawn from an agent of our Irish Mission ; and they still speak with enthusiasm of one of its past conveners as their kindest friend. When the history of Ireland comes to be read in the light of eternity, I do not doubt that one of its very brightest pages will be the record of the work carried on in the cluster of poor huts in the remote heart of the moors of Mayo.

As we left the village in the evening, I lifted up my heart in praise to God that our Church had sent one good man into this place over thirty years ago, who, since then, has been as a light shining in a dark place.

S. P.

CHAPTER IX

AT this point I may mention an occurrence which at the time excited much attention. I mean the assault committed on Dr. Dill by a Roman Catholic clergyman. The Rev. Edward M. Dill, formerly minister in Cork, but at this period engaged on the Irish Mission in Co. Kerry, visited Connaught, in order to see for himself the condition of the country, and to engage in any mission operation that might be found desirable. A school had been in operation at a country place about four miles from Ballina, but within the bounds of the Mullaferry or Killala congregation. After preaching on a Sabbath morning, he drove in company with the Rev. David Rodgers and some of his family to Ballymaciola, to conduct a service which had been opened for several months in the schoolhouse, and which was usually well attended, both by Protestants and the Roman Catholic friends of the pupils. A considerable number had gathered, and on Dr. Dill's arrival were about to enter the house, when suddenly the priest of the parish rode up, mounted on a spirited horse, which he pushed through the crowd, brandishing a horsewhip, and crying out vociferously for 'the Cock of the North.' He rode against Dr. Dill, and knocked him down. He struck several men, women, and children, some of them Presbyterians, blows over the head and shoulders. He threatened to run his whip down the throat of one of our worthy elders. The people began to disperse, some of them taking refuge in the schoolhouse. Retiring for a brief interval, he returned, and went through a similar performance. For this daring outrage he was

summoned to the Petty Sessions of Killala, and the case was referred by the magistrates to the Quarter Sessions in Ballina. I, as well as the newspaper reporter, took full notes of the proceedings for the local press, which were subsequently published in a pamphlet form. The charge was clearly established, no real defence being attempted. The County Court judge, a Roman Catholic, distinctly charged the jury for a verdict of guilty, telling them the case was proved beyond all question, and saying 'it was an intolerable thing for anyone in this free country so to outrage all decency and law, and that it was a still more grievous offence when committed by one who wore a clerical garb, and bore the office of a minister of religion and of the Gospel of Peace.' But it was all in vain. The jury, who had during the trial betrayed their entire sympathy with the accused, interchanging tokens of their feelings with him and his lawyers, after a brief retirement to their room, brought in, without hesitation, a verdict of 'not guilty.' Eleven of them were Roman Catholics; the solitary Protestant, a small farmer, dare not disagree with the verdict. The jury received a sharp reprimand from the Court, but the issue hardly took anyone by surprise. I had been assured from the outset, even by his own lawyers, that no jury in this locality would under any circumstances convict a priest. The public had taken it for granted it would be so. Yet the party did not boast much of their inglorious victory, and were thoroughly ashamed of their part of the proceedings. But such is trial by jury in such a region, even when British law is paramount. What would it be under another régime?

It is only right and fair to add that this reverend gentleman, who is now dead, never afterwards manifested any violent spirit. In fact, he was conspicuous for his mildness and moderation, co-operating with the Protestant ministers of the neighbourhood in obtaining and administering relief in the periodic seasons of distress. He took no part in politics, and rather incurred some odium by his opposition to the Land League and other combinations. This occurrence with Dr. Dill must be regarded as

an episode in his history rather than as an indication of his ordinary manner. It is not at all pleasant, and some may consider it undesirable, to recall such an occurrence as above detailed. As a truthful historian, I felt bound to recall it, containing as it does a moral not altogether inapplicable at the present day.

Dr. Dill belonged to a family which has given quite a number of notable men to the ministry. His brother, the Rev. Richard Dill, of Dublin, occupied a prominent place in the Church, and took a leading part in the debates of the General Assembly. The subject of this sketch was of a different type, and gave himself more to ministerial and missionary work. He was possessed of considerable literary powers, and in 1852 published a book entitled, 'The Mystery Solved ; or, Ireland's Miseries : their Cause and Cure.' The work was written with great power. While dealing fearlessly with that system which has been for ages such a foe to the temporal and spiritual interests of humanity, it was pervaded with a spirit of tender sympathy and pity to its victims. He was appointed in 1846 as General Itinerant Missionary Agent under the directors of the Home Mission, in which capacity he had visited Connaught.

In company with the Rev. Jonathan Simpson, of Portrush, he was sent by the missionary directors to the United States to plead the cause of the Home Mission. He landed in New York in November, 1848. Their united efforts were crowned with success ; and, though necessarily confined to but a few towns, the proceeds realized some £5,400 sterling. In 1850, along with some of the missionaries, he visited England for the same purpose, and they were well received. Of the amount raised by them, the sum of £1,089 was placed at the disposal of the superintendent in Connaught. Subsequently he accepted a situation as secretary of a Scottish Reformation Society, which cause he promoted with his customary energy and zeal. Returning to Ireland, he took charge of the congregation of Clonakilty, Co. Cork. His death took place at Fethard, on Sabbath morning, November 23, 1862, in the forty-ninth

year of his age. He had preached on the Sabbath before his death, so that it may be said he died in harness. He had a fine physique, and was endowed with many excellencies of head and heart. From his missionary work and his connection with Connaught, as well as his intimate friendly relationship with myself, it is right and becoming I should bear my testimony to this servant of God, Edward Marcus Dill.

It is now the time to make mention of one who was long identified with the mission in the West as superintendent of the Connaught schools, and founder of the Ballina Orphanage—namely, the Rev. Robert Allen. He was well known and highly esteemed by his contemporaries, and, though dead for a quarter of a century, his memory is fresh and fragrant in many hearts. Mr. Allen was a native of Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, where he was born on October 1, 1789, of respectable parentage. From his boyhood he gave himself to the Saviour, and was distinguished for piety and devotedness. He early entertained the desire to enter the ministry of the Gospel. After being educated at the Cookstown Academy, conducted by the Rev. Thomas Millar, he received his collegiate training in the University of Glasgow. On June 7, 1814, he was ordained minister of first Stewartstown. He there married a lady of good family and true Christian worth, by whom there were six children. His ministry was characterized by faithful discharge of duty. From the outset he gave much of his thought and time to the establishment of Scriptural schools for the education of the Irish in the mountains of Tyrone and Derry. On his appointment as superintendent of the the Connaught schools in 1848, he removed to Ballina, where he resided till his death in April, 1865.

The directors of the missions, while approving of the school system, declined, doubtless for wise and prudential reasons, to undertake their support, or make them a charge on the funds of the Home Mission ; but at the request of the Ladies' Association in Edinburgh, Mr. Allen was appointed by the Board to take them in charge and superintend their operations. To him, also, was committed the

onus and responsibility of raising the funds required for their maintenance, and for augmenting their number and usefulness. He arranged them into districts in the localities occupied by the several missionaries, and assigned them to their immediate and constant oversight, as the most simple, convenient, and efficient mode of management. Under this arrangement they still continue to be conducted, and the success vouchsafed to the schools has been owing in large measure to the regular and careful oversight of the ministers. However excellent, faithful, and devoted instructors of the young the teachers may be, the schools would but half serve the purpose if they were not under the missionaries' care. They were located in the mission districts, and within a convenient range of the centre of operations. In this way they have helped to fill the benches of the Sabbath-school, and to supply members to the Church.

Mr. Allen was a man of deep piety and devotedness to God. He was eminently possessed of sound judgment, and his entire procedure was marked by prudence, and by caution even, as some might think, to an extreme. To his sound and sagacious advice I was indebted in times of emergency. He sat under my ministry, and used to favour me with his candid yet kind comment on my sermons, which I received in a becoming manner. Though not what is called a popular preacher, he gave lucid expositions of the Gospel, being thoroughly conversant with the Calvinistic or Pauline system, and he kept up his reading in the current theological literature of the day to the very last. We ever maintained the closest and most cordial relations. He was to me 'guide, philosopher, and friend,' and he breathed his last in my arms.

I shall have occasion from time to time to refer to his work in connection with the orphanage and schools, as well as his valued help to the Ballina congregation.

CHAPTER X

EIGHTEEN hundred and forty-seven was known as 'the *Black 'Forty-seven*,' from its famine and fever and deaths. Eighteen hundred and forty-eight has been called the 'Year of Revolutions,' and, though Connaught was not the scene of actual revolt, it was affected by the prevailing epidemic, but fortunately in a comparatively milder degree than Leinster or Munster. The French Revolution of February, 1848, which issued in the overthrow of the Monarchy, was the signal for uprisings over Europe. The most powerful dynasties were shaken, and several of the sovereigns were driven into exile; others of them, wisely bowing before the storm, conceded constitutional government. The triumph of the popular cause excited wild hopes of national independence among large numbers of the Irish people. The party to which I refer was at this time divided into two sections—the 'Old Ireland' party and the 'Young Ireland' or 'Confederates,' as they were designated. The former relied on moral and political influences alone; the latter did not conceal their purpose, if the occasion and opportunity were suitable, to appeal to physical force. Confederate clubs were established over Connaught, as well as in the other provinces; and arming and drilling were carried on, sometimes with open daring, or under the friendly shelter of the night. In Ballina and throughout the province the excitement on the one hand, and the apprehension and alarm of the loyal portion of the community on the other, were very intense. These latter, being few in numbers and widely scattered, without military protection, the worst

fears were entertained regarding the proceedings of a civil war. Large quantities of steel were bought for making pike-heads. Those who could afford it provided themselves with rifles and bayonets. One of the well-known local leaders told me that a Provisional Government would be formed in Ireland, but reassured me by saying I would be the last person they would lay a finger on. It was not much of a consolation in the circumstances. But the Government were on the alert, and struck suddenly and sharply. Many of the foremost men were arrested, and in the month of July the threatened revolution ended in the miserable fiasco of Ballingarry.

It was well known in Ballina that the rising would take place in the south. For days were we all on the alert, with varied feelings of hopes and fears, waiting anxiously for the arrival of the coach or Bianconi, then the sole mode of communication with the metropolis. I was a close observer of events. The day after the affair at Ballingarry, as the coach came down the street, the prominent members of the movement eagerly waited for the expected signal. The driver, one of themselves, a Tipperary man, made a downward motion with his hand ; this and the aspect of his face clearly indicated that all was over. The future captains, colonels, and generals slunk off with despondency and despair marked on their countenances. It was said, had a different signal been given, the pikes would have been out, and perhaps a bloody tragedy enacted. As it was, I went to my home with a more easy mind and lighter heart than I had come out with. It was not, however, the last occasion on which we had reason to apprehend a similar if not more formidable threatening of outbreak and revolt. That will be noticed in due course. In my boyhood two of the men who occupied a very prominent position in the Young Ireland party were companions of mine. With one I was at school ; the other was a draper's assistant. When yet in my teens, he used in the evenings to get me to accompany him to the country, where, under the direction of an army pensioner, he learned to use the rifle. He was now tried and sentenced to be hanged ; but the punishment

was commuted to transportation. He is long since dead. The other was tried several times, but the juries disagreed and he was discharged. In one of our colonies he attained a high position, and was, I believe, Prime Minister, and received knighthood from the Queen. He is still living.

Concurrently with these stirring events, another kind of revolution was in progress in the Imperial Parliament, and one which led to very great social and territorial changes. The Encumbered Estates Act was introduced into the House of Lords in February, 1848, and finally became law in the July following. Such a measure was imperatively called for, both as an act of necessity and mercy. A large number of landowners were loaded with an intolerable burden of debt, either inherited or personally incurred. With a nominal rent-roll of thousands or even ten thousand a year, a few hundreds of pounds were all that was available for their own use. I have known the owners of a noble mansion, with estates stretching out for miles, reduced to comparative beggary. They were consequently unable to improve their property or afford indulgence to the tenantry; and there was a strong temptation to rack-renting, a custom which had prevailed for many years. The holders of mortgages and marriage settlements became clamorous for payment of their claims. But neither interest nor principal could be met, for no rents had been paid during the famine. The aim of the Encumbered Estates Act was to give a cheaper and more speedy method of bringing such properties into the market, on petition either of the owner or his creditors, than was afforded by the dilatory and costly Court of Chancery. This was with the view of clearing away of debts and liabilities, so that the purchaser might enter into possession freed from all burdens of family debts and settlements, with a Parliamentary title, brief and simple, instead of the lengthy and complicated forms hitherto in use.

It was a wise measure, but, unhappily, in its working was fraught with great injury and injustice to the landowners affected by it. They were made to suffer for the sins of their ancestors. They had been reduced to help-

lessness, and were utterly unable to retrieve their condition. The properties were pushed for sale to such an extent as to become a drug in the market, and did not realize anything like the value, so that in many instances there was not enough to pay off the debts, thus leaving the former proprietors in utter destitution, when it might have been expected they would have had a moderate income. Some years after, these estates were sold at an enormous increase, bringing twenty-five or twenty-seven years' purchase, whereas not more than twelve, and sometimes as low as five years' purchase had been given at the sale by the Court.

The Act, however, on the whole, was a great boon, though I confess I was rather disappointed at some of the results. I had thought that the breaking up of huge properties into moderate-sized portions must lead to the formation of a class of resident owners, whose presence and example and encouragement would stimulate the farmers to greater industry and an improved mode of agriculture, and also that the management of estates on the English and Scottish system would introduce a better order of things. But it was not so. Most of the new proprietors had regarded their purchase-money as a mere investment, and to bring in a good interest in return they bought on the rental. Rents were increased; and the cold calculations of these merchants or traders or usurers were not regarded as a very great change for the better from the rather loose and reckless ways of the old owners. I asked a small farmer how he liked his new landlord. He replied: 'Why, Lord So-and-so was sometimes hard enough, but Paddy — (who had made his money by penuriousness and usury) not only knows how many cattle we have, but can count up our ducks and hens, and he does put the screw on. I would rather be under a gentleman than a gombeen man.'

Several had been sanguine enough to expect something like the Ulster Plantation as the result of these sales. But British capitalists would not invest. They dreaded (and after-events showed they were not far astray) a revival of disturbance and outrage, and would not risk their lives or

fortunes on such a prospect. Hence, the great bulk of the purchasers were Irish. The official returns showed that, while the gross amount of the sales had been upwards of three and a half millions sterling, there had been only fifty-two English and Scottish purchasers, to the amount of £319,846.

The returns of the Court up to August, 1857, showed that out of 7,489 purchasers 7,180 were Irish, and only 309 British or foreigners. Out of twenty millions and a half sterling realized to that date, more than five-sixths of the amount was Irish capital, so that the infusion of new blood was not to the extent that many had expected or hoped for, and that others had equally dreaded.

The diminution of the population continued during 1848. Holders of land with their families, numbering about 130,000 persons, disappeared from Connaught. In Ulster for the same period the decrease was 1,502. The figures are significant and suggestive. The emigration tide still flowed steadily, while the privations of those who remained were very great. John Mitchell writes : ' Here is one paragraph from amongst the commercial reports of the Irish papers which will suggest more than any laboured narrative could inculcate : " Upwards of one hundred and fifty ass-hides have been delivered in Dublin from the *County Mayo* for exportation to Liverpool. The carcases, owing to the scarcity of provisions, had been used as food." '

Amidst all the alarms, and notwithstanding the depressed condition of matters, I had not been unmindful of our congregational interests. Alive to the serious hindrance to our progress arising from the want of having a church building of our own, I had been on the look-out for a suitable site. None was obtainable from any of the great owners of town property, except at an unreasonable rent, and on an insufficient tenure. At last a most desirable site was secured, a building committee was formed, and active measures adopted for proceeding to procure the necessary funds, and for the erection of church premises. It was certainly a courageous act, and I have sometimes since wondered at the venture, with so many and great discouragements, and so little to cheer. But I had youth on

my side, and with rather a light heart set myself to the arduous work. I have before me the first printed appeal for money I ever made, and also the names of our congregational committee. As I am sure this information will be both novel and interesting to many, I propose to give the particulars. But these, with the details of our procedure, I reserve to my next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

AS I had now been in Ballina since November, 1845, and had been ordained in May, 1846, I considered it was full time to have a more visible and tangible manifestation of our existence as a congregation than was afforded by a mere room as our place of meeting, situated as it was in a by-lane of the town. Compared with the Episcopal and Wesleyan Churches, I felt we were in an inferior position, and that our location acted as a deterrent on any addition to our cause. 'To be, or not to be,' was the question, and I resolved it was 'to be.' The difficulty was to get a site in a good locality and at a reasonable rent. Some places could be had on moderate terms, but they were objectionable from their situation. Others, in a favourable location, were too dear, for house property in Ballina is let much above its value. After many disappointments, ground was obtained from a respectable Roman Catholic party, with a lease for 999 years, at an annual rent of £10. There had been an extensive military barrack on the place, and some of the buildings were available for our structures, but we had to pay £170 purchase money. It was fortunate that we were shut up to this site, as it is certainly in all respects the very best in Ballina.

The committee of the congregation met and issued the following appeal. It was my first attempt at begging, but I have had considerable experience since, for the last forty-two years :

'BALLINA,
' *December, 1848.*

'The Presbyterians of Ballina and neighbourhood have long laboured under the inconvenience and disadvantage

of not having a suitable place of worship. Having been enabled at last to procure a convenient site, they have determined, with the aid of their Christian friends, to erect a meeting-house. As the ground will admit also of a manse and schoolhouse, it would be their desire to build these also. The fewness of their number renders it wholly impossible to do this of themselves, and makes it necessary for them to apply to the members of their own Church in other places, and to the Christians of other denominations, to whose kindness and liberality they confidently look for assistance in this undertaking.'

This appeal was signed by the following: the Rev. Thomas Armstrong, the Rev. Robert Allen, J. D. Carnegie, J. C. O. Urquhart, Hugh Dunlop, David Baird, John Anderson, Robert A. Duncan, John Little, John M'Culloch, Evans B. Grove, William Richey. Of these the solitary survivors are myself and Mr. Carnegie, now of Dublin, at that time manager of the Ballina branch of the National Bank. One only has left any representative in connection with the church—Mr. David Baird, whose son has succeeded his father as treasurer of the congregation.

I have the original collecting-book before me, and find that the total of the Ballina subscriptions was not more than £70. Then there was a grant of £300 from the Bicentenary Fund; so that, deducting the amount of the purchase-money, legal and other preliminary expenses, there was left barely £170 to build the proposed church, manse, and schoolhouse. The original purpose was to erect the church in the centre, with the manse at one side and the schoolhouse at the other; but the smallness of our resources and the felt difficulty of collecting sufficient funds elsewhere led to a modification of our plans, and to the adoption of a less pretentious style of architecture than was contemplated. The church and manse were put under one continuous roof, and the schoolroom was placed underneath the church. There was consequently a vacant part of the ground, which we made several abortive attempts to have taken off our hands or otherwise disposed of. Provi-

dentially, we were not successful in this, for in the course of a few years the Orphanage or Refuge Home was erected on this plot, so that what was then regarded as a burden resulted as a great boon and blessing in connection with the Irish Mission. After collecting in Sligo, where I met a very kind and liberal reception, I proceeded to Belfast, where I found a true and trusty friend in Dr. Edgar. Having subscribed himself, he brought me to a meeting of the ministers, with the view of having a recommendation of my case signed by them. One of the number was very cautious, and interposed the difficulty that in consequence of an arrangement with the subscribers to the Bicentenary Fund, no individual appeal for church or manse should be sanctioned. I was rather taken aback at this; but Dr. Cooke said: 'I will never stand as a watch-dog on any man's pocket. Give me the pen.' So Dr. Edgar wrote out the recommendation in my book, and I have still the autograph signatures of Henry Cooke, D.D., LL.D.; John Edgar, D.D.; James Morgan, D.D.; David Hamilton; George Bellis, and William Gibson. Armed with this, I went to work with good results, although, owing to peculiar circumstances which need not be mentioned, the time was not favourable for raising money. In May, 1849, I attended the meeting of Synod in Dublin, and gave an address. The following resolution was passed: 'The Synod, having heard the interesting statement of Mr. Armstrong, of Ballina, as to his efforts to establish a congregation and build a church in that town, resolved: that Mr. Armstrong possesses the full confidence of this Synod, that we approve of the objects which he and his congregation have in view, and do hereby cordially recommend him to the liberality of our Christian people. (Signed) JAMES BEATTY, *Synod's Clerk.*'

Next Sabbath I attended Mary's Abbey Church. Dr. Kirkpatrick very kindly spoke from the pulpit, warmly recommending me and my cause; and I took part in the communion services, as it was the day for dispensing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Several subscriptions were handed in at the close of the service, and I was courteously and generously received during the week, not

only by the members of Mary's Abbey, but also by those of other congregations. As I look over my book, I find that nearly all of my good and generous friends have 'fallen asleep.' Two remain until this day—Dr. Duncan and David Drummond, Esq.—and I still continue to receive proofs of their sympathy and goodwill towards my work.*

Having returned to Ballina, I took rest for several months, in attending to my congregational duties and looking after the building operations. In my frequent journeys I may mention that the pulpit services were looked after by Mr. Allen. In the month of October, 1850, I went to Scotland on the first, but not the last, collecting tour in that kingdom. Commencing in Glasgow, I was welcomed by the Rev. William Arnot, the well-known preacher and author, the minister of Free St. Peter's. He had been with me in the preceding year visiting the scenes of famine and pestilence, and interesting himself in our evangelistic work. He insisted that I should make his house my home, and wrote a hearty commendation of the object of my visit. Dr. Samuel Miller, of Free St. Matthew's, did the same. Friends were raised up on all sides, and I had pleasant and prosperous times. Glasgow made such an impression on me at the time that I could never forget or forego its claims on my grateful attentions, and I still continue to pay it an annual visit.

With Edinburgh I had had very pleasant memories and associations from my student days, and, after an interval of seven years, was glad to revisit former scenes, and renew some old acquaintanceships. Here, too, my course was prosperous; indeed, Edinburgh did remarkably well—in fact, very much better than I had been led to expect. Dundee was also visited, and, finding here some old friends, my way was opened up, and the result was highly satisfactory.

Having now been more than two months on my travels, and as it was near the end of December, I deferred my journeyings to the North of Scotland for a more convenient season, being naturally desirous of spending Christmas at

* Since dead.



BALLINA.

(To face page 64.)

and fed Thee," etc. But if I entered what I gave to the Lord's people and cause, I could not say that. Now, whenever I contribute I try to forget all about it.'

On the whole, my lengthened and extensive experience in this department of Christian work has led me to sympathize very deeply with those brethren in the ministry who are compelled to have recourse to this method of raising funds for the erection of, or clearing debt off, churches and manses. It has been said, and truly, that ministers should not be called on to engage in collecting money beyond the bounds of their own congregations. But what is to be done? Did not so many undertake this self-denying service, not a few of our churches and manses would be non-existent.

CHAPTER XII

THE year 1849 may be termed the 'Cholera Year,' as there was then an outbreak of that fearful epidemic. It wrought considerable havoc in Ballina. Several of my acquaintances were affected by it, and in a number of instances the result was fatal. I had a sharp attack myself. One night I went to my room in my usual health and without the slightest premonitory symptom, and awoke in the course of an hour in great suffering from the cholera. Fortunately, there was a medical man in the house, and I received immediate attention. For some hours the skill of the physician was baffled, every remedy being tried without effect. At last a prescription was administered with the desired result, and by morning the disease had been mastered, but I was left very weak and prostrate for days. Meanwhile, the report had gone abroad of my illness, and it seemed to have been taken for granted that, as in so many other cases, the attack had proved fatal, and that I was dead. Accordingly many persons called with the inquiry, 'When is Mr. Armstrong to be buried?' My room was situated on the first landing, and, being roused at each knock or ring at the hall-door, I overheard the question. Well, thanks to the Lord! I was spared. Not a few of my inquiring friends did die of the prevailing disease, and hardly one of them is now in the land of the living.

The general effect on the public mind was of a solemnizing and awe-stricken character; the people were in a panic, and as each successive death took place friends and acquaintances were brought to realize the uncertainty of life

and the need there was to be prepared for eternity. Others got reckless, and sought to drown reflection in gaiety and dissipation. In a respectable circle a ball was given, but surely in utter thoughtlessness. Of those who took part in that festive scene, before many days a number had been laid in the grave. The ball was known as 'the dance of death.'

A remarkable occurrence heralded the advent of the cholera, and signified its departure. At one of the outskirts of the town there was an extensive rookery. Just before the outbreak of the epidemic all the crows disappeared. Where they went I do not know, but they returned to their former haunts as soon as the cholera ceased. What the meaning of this migration was, or by what peculiar instinct these creatures were cognisant of the event, I leave naturalists, and especially ornithologists, to account for and explain.

To revert to matters ecclesiastical. The year 1849 was notable for the ordination of two men who have since made their mark in history—namely, Messrs. Hamilton Magee and Matthew Kerr. These were ordained together on August 8th in the church at Mullaferry, the former as pastor of the Killala congregation and missionary in the district, the latter as missionary at Dromore West. Both of them had been members of the Students' Missionary Association, which had selected Connaught as the sphere of their efforts, and had already sent Mr. Brannigan as their first missionary; and they now came to carry on personally the work in which they were so deeply interested. The Rev. David Rodgers, of Killala congregation, was at this period in infirm health, and Mr. Magee had been appointed to supply for him at the close of the college session of 1848. Having been chosen by the congregation, he was ordained on August 8, 1849, where he continued till his removal to the superintendence of the Roman Catholic Mission in Dublin. Mr. Kerr had selected Dromore West as his post. This place had been opened up by Mr. Brannigan on his arrival in Connaught in the latter end of 1845. For a time the Sabbath services were conducted in a private house

and afterwards in a barn, and were continued till the arrival of Mr. Kerr in 1848. The congregation then became considerably increased, and memorialized the Assembly, praying that a church should be erected and the congregation permanently established. By the exertions of Mr. Kerr, a commodious place of worship was built, and opened for Divine service by Dr. Edgar in May, 1850. Whether from prejudice or narrowness of view, the landlord would not give a lease for the erection of a *church*, but merely for a schoolhouse, wherein the Scriptures were to be daily taught, and to be used as a preaching-place on the Sabbath. Meanwhile, the congregation having no 'local habitation,' though they had 'a name,' Mr. Kerr was ordained by the Connaught Presbytery on the same occasion and in company with his friend, Mr. Magee.

Killala, to the pastorate of which Mr. Magee was ordained, was originally known by the name of Moywater, as the church, it is said, then stood on an island in the river Moy, and afterwards on the mainland on the bank of that river, about three miles from its present site. I have stood within the ruined walls of the latter building, which are, however, no longer to be found, the tenant, an enterprising Scottish farmer, having cleared them away amid his other improvements. The congregation was originally a joint charge with Sligo, nearly forty miles distant, and the first minister, the Rev. Samuel Henry, was ordained by the Presbytery of *Convoy*, Co. Donegal, in 1695.

In the following year there was another double ordination. Ballymoate was one of the old congregations of the Connaught Presbytery, having been formed about 1760, when a number of Ulster and Scottish settlers came to the locality, with a view to the introduction of the linen manufacture. Having flourished for several years, the congregation was very much thinned by emigration, by which, with other causes, it was greatly reduced. The first time I was at Ballymoate, on the occasion of a visitation Presbytery, access to the meeting-house was obtained by a stile and a rude pathway through a potato-field. The church was much dilapidated. Adjoining the entrance was a shebeen-

house, and altogether the aspect of the place and the circumstances of the congregation made a saddening and dispiriting impression. Things have greatly altered, and for the better, since that time. The settlement of the Rev. John Dewart was followed by the happiest effects. The church building was restored, a handsome manse erected, and also a schoolhouse, the shebeen-house cleared away, and, by the faithful and earnest preaching of the Gospel, a genuine and abiding revival of religion was effected, which continues to the present under Mr. Dewart's successors. But we must not anticipate the history. The ordination took place in October, 1850.

Along with him was also ordained the Rev. John Hall, now D.D., of New York.* He had come as a missionary to Camlin, and preached fortnightly in the Wesleyan chapel of Boyle. Camlin had previously been ministered to for some time by the Rev. T. Y. Killen. There was in Camlin, as in Dromore West, no 'local habitation'; accordingly, advantage was taken of the settlement of Mr. Dewart. Mr. Hall was ordained at the same time and place.

* Since died.

CHAPTER XIII

TO look a little forward, and to pass by in the meanwhile the interesting organization of Clogher and the settlement of the Rev. John Barnett, the students' first missionary to that place, I will refer to a third double ordination. As in the preceding cases, one of the ministers was ordained to the pastorate of the congregation, and the other as a missionary. Creevelea, in Co. Leitrim, near the town of Drumkeerin, owes its origin as a congregation to the opening up of iron and coal mines in that locality, which were owned by a Scotch company, and the principal managers and skilled workers were Scotch and Presbyterian. They were visited by the Rev. James Heron, of Sligo, who also occasionally preached on weekdays. The attention of the Presbytery having been called to it, arrangements were made for a regular supply. The Rev. John Ashmore, who had been conducting the Dromore West school, received a call, and was ordained on December 15, 1852, under very auspicious and promising circumstances. A few weeks afterwards the temporary building occupied as a place of worship (it was a wooden structure) was burnt to the ground, whether accidentally or maliciously by an incendiary, as some surmised, I will not try to determine. But with characteristic pluck the people set about its restoration. The following day, while the ruins were yet smoking, the work began; the walls were raised higher, a porch and vestry were added, and the congregation met in it on the following Sabbath! All went on satisfactorily for some years. But, unfortunately, like too many other enterprises to introduce British capital and to develop the

mineral and other resources of Ireland, the project came to an end. Most of the Scotch families returned to their own country. At present there is a good church and manse, but the congregation is small.

The other minister ordained with Mr. Ashmore was the Rev. James Robinson, who had succeeded Mr. Hall in Camlin, he having gone to First Armagh. It was soon found that Boyle should be the centre point of operations, as being an important town and the most convenient for the worshippers. This necessitated a change of the hour of service from evening to midday, but the use of the court-house was consequently withdrawn. A place for meeting was then rented, and the attendance continued steadily to increase. Mr. Robinson remained for seven years, when he retired in consequence of ill-health, and died in 1858.

The proceedings of the ordination were of an interesting character. Though in 'dull December,' the day was bright and cheering. Twelve ministers were present, of whom no fewer than eight had been fellow-students and members of the Students' Missionary Association.

At this period, and long after, the inconvenience and expense connected with attending meetings of Presbytery were very great. There was no railway within our bounds. To many of the places there was no regular public conveyance by coach or Bianconi car, and we had to post distances of from thirty to fifty miles. It took nearly a week to accomplish the going and returning. Yet the brethren did attend with conscientious regularity, feeling the necessity of maintaining Presbyterianism in our corporate capacity. Yet there were compensations for the drawbacks referred to. The manses became hotels for the time, where hospitality was exercised, and the genial intercourse, with interchange of views and confidential conversation, made it both pleasant and profitable. For my part, being Clerk of Presbytery, I was bound to be a constant attendant, so that from the beginning of my office till my resignation of it on becoming superintendent of the schools in 1868, I was never absent from a meeting of Presbytery for a period of more than twenty years.

On our return from Cleevelea, the night set in with storm and drenching showers. I was accompanied on an outside car by Mr. Barnett, of Clogher. Thoroughly wet and weary, and being rather unwell, we thought of stopping for the night at the first convenient place, which was a small, poor village; the houses were mean, thatched cabins. Being directed to the best lodging-house, we found it very uncomfortable, and with rain falling down through the roof. We took to the outside in preference, and continued our way, till, after a lengthened and tedious journey, we arrived, long after midnight, at the town of Ballymoate, where we found suitable accommodation in the hotel. Next day I reached Ballina, having spent a week in attending this one meeting of Presbytery.

There is still no small amount of trouble and discomfort, as well as expenditure of money and time, incurred in the discharge of our Presbyterial duties. These can hardly be realized by many of our more highly favoured brethren in Ulster, a number of whom can drive or even walk to and from the place of meeting, and take part in the business, and all within the compass of a few hours, and without any cost. Yet even with such the attendance of the Connaught ministers on church courts will bear no unfavourable comparison—a fact which speaks well for their loyalty to Presbyterian principles and polity.

In May, 1850, we were favoured with a visit from the Rev. Dr. Cooke, of Belfast. This was not the first appearance of that distinguished divine in Connaught. About thirty years previously he officiated for a few Sabbaths in Westport, where a congregation was in process of formation. He now came for the special purpose of formally opening the new church in Ballinglen, the necessary funds having been collected by Mr. Brannigan; and the agreeable announcement was made that there was no debt on the building. This happy result was largely owing to the labours of Mr. David Kerr Clarke, for long well known as financial agent of the Home Mission, and a promoter of every good work. He was especially interested in our province, and his initials, D. K. C., were humorously ren-

dered 'David, King of Connaught.' In M'Comb's Almanack for 1885 there is an excellent likeness of Mr. Clarke, and the following quaint lines attached to it are so descriptive of the man that we insert them here :

'Look on this frontispiece and mark
The persevering D. K. Clarke ;
In Zion's cause, both night and day,
He labours on incessantly.
When work is to be done—he's there,
At home, abroad, and everywhere.'

He was an ardent admirer and adherent of Dr. Cooke, and now came with him as his guide and friend to what he was wont to call 'benighted but beloved Connaught.'

Dr. Cooke, on his way, had preached in Enniskillen and Sligo, taking collections for the building fund, and also in Ballina, where the Wesleyan chapel was kindly given for the service. In his speech at the General Assembly, giving an account of this tour, he was rather complimentary to us. He said : 'I had next an opportunity of preaching to the enlightened people of Ballina.' On Sabbath he conducted the opening services in Ballinglen. There was a large attendance from all quarters—from Ballina and other distant places—and the Doctor preached with great power and thrilling eloquence. It was a day greatly to be remembered. He was highly gratified with all he saw, and the attention paid to him. In the evening he went to Mullaferry, where he preached. On the following day he laid the foundation-stone of a schoolhouse in Ballinglen, which our Scottish friends were erecting for an agricultural establishment ; and he remarked, 'It was delightful to hear people so long kept in ignorance singing the Psalms of David to true old "Scottish tunes."' He then made a tour to Belmullet. In his speech at the Assembly, he said : 'Before us we had the blue Atlantic teeming with fish, and the people with no means of catching them unless by standing on the shore with a rod. Where would they get a rod ? It is easy for those before me to get a rod at any time ; but what will you think when I tell you that my friend, Mr. Clarke, and myself travelled for a distance of

many miles (from thirty to forty) without seeing a single tree or plant, with the exception of the trees at Bingham Castle, and one or two plants in the fair and promising Isle of Achill. Such was the dreariness of the scene around me that at last I said to Mr. Clarke, "My dear friend, we are coming to something now—I see a briar." I wondered what had become of the timber. I saw the great roots of the oaks and firs in bog after bog, but as far as my eye could reach a single plant, beyond the dignity of the briar, I could not discover on the whole road—no, not even a ragweed. In the town of Belmullet I saw a number of women carrying creels of chickweed, used for feeding cows and pigs. They carried these burdens six miles in and six miles out, and the remuneration was a halfpenny or, at most, a penny. That is a specimen of the economic state of Connaught.' The Doctor bore testimony to the value of the work being carried on in the education of the young, and the intelligence of the children. 'I examined them in the Scriptures, not superficially, but almost as carefully as I would examine a student of the first year in theology.'

'These Connaught children fairly astonished me. I asked them several questions, and they answered as correctly as anyone in this Assembly could answer. Now, is it not a matter of much gratification to find a boy or girl, that but for your labours would be as ignorant of the Bible and of the principles of common literature, answering in a way that would do credit to a student of the third year in the Queen's College? I cannot sit down without expressing my astonishment at the marvellous warmheartedness of your missionaries. I suppose it is because we meet so often here that we manifest so little warmth of feeling and little hospitality one to another; and, therefore, it was to me most gratifying to see the ministers, their wives, and elders with eyes beaming with Christian love and generosity, and to feel the warm grasp of friendship from their hands. I really think that when we grow cold with one another down here we ought to be sent now and then to be heated in Connaught. There was another thing that gratified me very much: that was the effect produced by their labours

on our young ministers. I really thought, and I still think, that if the Assembly were to enact a law that no man should be permitted to obtain a congregation in Ulster until, like one of Paul's deacons, he had earned a good degree by passing two years in Connaught, it would be better than any degree a college could give him. I was much animated and strengthened by witnessing the zeal, earnestness, and faithfulness of our missionaries ; and I do believe that if some of our faculty of theology—myself among the rest—were to be sent to Connaught, the result would be most cheering and beneficial. I conclude by saying that many a religious journey I have taken, but, putting them altogether, I never was so edified, elevated, and comforted, I never was so truly instructed in what grace can do, and what God in His goodness has enabled the Assembly to do, as I was by the brief journey I took through Connaught.'

In the course of his speech the Doctor referred to some of the difficulties the schools had to contend with, and the opposition they encountered. He said : ' I cannot forget to mention the terrors of the priest, to which Dr. Dill has alluded. I myself got a specimen of them on my journey. In a town in the county Mayo two ladies walked into a shop and as they were making their bargain there presented himself a rotund, burly priest, who called out, " Mistress, three yards of whipcord ; the crackers of my whip stand no time." He got his whipcord, and, as he was going out of the shop, the woman said, " Och, the blessed man, he scolds, he curses, and flogs them for breaking the Sabbath." Now, here were three modes of exercising church discipline, cursing, scolding, and buying three yards of whipcord for breaking the Sabbath. I believe the three spells are broken. The scolding has given place to the mild tones of the preached Gospel, the cursing to the uplifted hand of the triple benediction, and the whip to the rod which the Saviour holds in the hand of His eternal love.'

CHAPTER XIV

BALLINGLEN has had a name and fame of its own. First of all in connection with the Rev. Michael Brannigan, who opened the mission there and founded its church and schools ; and, secondly, from the operations of the Scottish Ladies' Society in Aid of the Home Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. *The Glen*, as it is called, has many natural advantages, and is at once romantically and beautifully situated. On either side is a ridge of mountains, which at the summit are wild and bare. The valley is naturally of rich soil and fertile. The Ballinglen River runs through the centre of the valley, in which were built the church and schoolhouse by Mr. Brannigan ; and soon after a farmhouse, with buildings designed to accommodate boys and girls who were to be trained for agricultural and industrial pursuits. There are also the picturesque remains of an old castle. On the south the glen may be said to be sheltered by Mount Nephin, one of the highest mountains in Ireland, while on the north it looks out on the wide Atlantic. On one side there is what is known as 'the rotten rock,' apparently composed of petrified vegetable matter, and at its top is one of the holy wells. Some time after Mr. Brannigan's settlement in Ballinglen the Scottish Ladies' Society became interested in the place, and entered earnestly and energetically into mission operations, cordially co-operating with Mr. Brannigan and Mr. Allen. This society had been originated by Lady Colquhoun of Luss, and was reconstituted in 1841, Miss Charlotte Pringle, of Edinburgh, being the secretary. Considerable sums of money were raised by their instru-

mentality, which were devoted to the Irish Presbyterian Home Mission, in the support of schools, and in rendering assistance to Irish-speaking students in preparing them for the ministry. On the appointment of Mr. Allen as superintendent of the schools, the society paid most of his salary for some years. During the famine, in addition to the aid given for spiritual purposes, they contributed largely for the relief of the destitute and starving. Ultimately their efforts were mainly concentrated on Ballinglen, upholding the day-school and originating the boarding institution, leading on to a model farm for the training of boys in an improved style of agriculture, and thereby setting an example to the neighbouring farmers. For this purpose the Castle Farm was first rented, and afterwards purchased at the sale of the property in the Landed Estates Court in November, 1853. A committee of gentlemen had been formed in Scotland for the purpose of raising the amount required; and the farm, comprising about 230 acres, of which 100 acres were arable, was bought for £2,050. This was a high price, but the result of the sale of the whole estate had been highly favourable to the proprietor. At some time before it could have been bought for £50,200, but when brought to the hammer it realized more than £73,000, or twenty-five and a half years' purchase.

Fears had been entertained of a competition by a hostile party, and not without reason. The Jesuits bid by their agents, and though unsuccessful in obtaining this coveted lot, they purchased two adjoining lots, with the purpose of counteracting the Mission operations. But they were foiled. Owing to the existence of a lease of which they were ignorant, they could not get possession of their purchase for twenty years; and so their plans were defeated, for the Jesuits disposed of these lots to a Protestant gentleman who had bought largely at the sale.

The committee of the Ballinglen Institution had now become the proprietors in trust of the farm on which their operations had hitherto been conducted, which now, it may be said, entered on a new epoch. The Rev. Dr. Duff, who had visited the locality in the previous year, had drawn

up an elaborate plan for the management of the establishment ; it was rather an ambitious one : ' Why not, said he, turn the farm, or rather the whole glen, when purchased, to profitable account in behalf of the whole county of Mayo, and even regions beyond ? But how is this to be done ? Here is the general conception of a fairly practicable plan. Let an enlarged institute, without interfering with the existing local day and infant schools, be established at Ballinglen as a receptacle for the upbringing of the cleverest youths from all the surrounding schools connected with the Protestant Missions, or any others willing to submit unconditionally to the regulations of the central seminary. Let it be proclaimed throughout the whole of these mission stations that annually, after due trial and examination, so many of the best boys as to talent, character, and proficiency will, as a reward, on the principle of scholarship or bursary, be drafted off to the Ballinglen Institute, there to be fed and clothed, while receiving an education at once intellectual, religious, and agricultural. One great object being to initiate the youths in the actual processes of improved agriculture, the industrial operations would be chiefly carried on by them without extraneous aid. In the same way there might be a superior seminary for girls, supported out of the proceeds of the farm, who should receive not only a higher intellectual and religious education, but be initiated into the various functions of domestic and household economy, and thus be prepared to become practically useful wives for educated husbands. Such heads of families, gradually spreading over the country, would be so many living centres of wholesome emanative influence, and thus accelerate the progress of onward improvement.'

Accordingly, suitable buildings were erected to accommodate the male and female teachers and the land steward, with his wife as matron ; separate dormitories for boys and girls, with iron beds, and the various culinary and other conveniences for such an establishment ; also rooms for the lady secretary and for the use of visitors. A head teacher was appointed, with assistants for the male and female and infant schools. A steward was set over the

farm to direct and carry on all its operations. These officials were all Scottish; and, being entirely under Scottish management and control, it was considered that the Institute, with schools and farm work, would be managed with the utmost prudence and on strict business principles, and, with the blessing of God, prove a boon and a blessing to the country. This was the ardent wish and desire of Mr. Allen and his Irish brethren. Indeed, Mr. Allen devoted much time and attention in giving all needed help to the ladies and the committee, and they rightly regarded him as a true friend and wise counsellor. Mr. Brannigan's services were also cheerfully rendered, and were invaluable. This union and co-operation continued for several years, till 1861, when changes took place, the nature of which, with their results, must be left for notice at the proper time.

In the view of future events, it will require to be borne in mind that at this period there were *two* distinct and independent evangelistic agencies in operation in the region now referred to. The first, both in order of time and importance, was that of the Mission of the *Irish* Presbyterian Church. This was under the immediate direction of the Rev. Michael Brannigan. He preached not only in Ballinglen, but throughout a very wide and extensive district, having a staff of Scripture-readers and school-teachers, these latter under the supervision of the Rev. Robert Allen, who had been appointed by the General Assembly as superintendent of the Connaught schools. This agency has continued ever since, and is at present a power for good. There are, of course, changes in the names and persons of the representative parties. The Rev. James Wilkin occupies the position and does the work of Mr. Brannigan, while I am the successor of Mr. Allen.

The scheme of the Ballinglen Agricultural Farm and Institute was purely *Scottish* in its inception and operations, and has long since been discontinued. In Dr. Duff's words, 'As to *teachers*, I do hope that Scotland will furnish the needful supply. As to the chief management of the whole, it will tend greatly to simplicity, unity, and effect if it be reserved in the hands of the original projectors of

the Ballinglen enterprise, or a committee of their number acting as trustees in Edinburgh. All this is quite consistent with the maintenance of a friendly and harmonious co-operation with the respected brethren and coadjutors of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland.' He adds: 'May the friendship and harmony between the godly and devoted members of that Church and ourselves, in all purely evangelic enterprises, be perpetual.'

Previous to and during the period of which I have been writing, great missionary efforts had been made in Connaught on the part of the then Established Church, and as I was acquainted with the leading actors in that movement, and more or less conversant with the work as carried on, it comes fairly within my scope to make mention of it. I refer to the mission in the island of Achill, with which is intimately associated the name of the Rev. Edward Nangle, and the operations carried on in West Galway in connection with the Irish Church Missions, under the direction of the Rev. Alexander R. C. Dallas.

Achill is an island situated off the coast of Mayo, separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, or, as it is called, the Sound. It is about eighteen miles long and ten broad, and is chiefly composed of mountainous tracts and extensive boggy lands. The inhabitants were very poor and ignorant. Out of a population in 1831 of nearly 6,000, there were but 76 Protestants, of whom the greater portion was composed of coastguards and their families. There was no regular school in the island, and the few who could read had acquired the art from an itinerant teacher, or 'hedge schoolmaster.' The Holy Scriptures were quite unknown, and at the beginning of the missionary operations only one man was found who had so much as a copy of the New Testament. No Protestant clergyman was resident in the island. The nearest lived in Newport, and never visited Achill, from which place he received £100 per annum. Under the régime of the priests, the vast majority were not merely devoted Roman Catholics, but were characterized by the grossest ignorance and superstition. Implicit reliance was placed on 'gospels,' 'scapulars,' and other

amulets or charms, as sure defences against calamities of all kinds. Recourse was also had to 'offices,' which consisted of some Latin prayers for the cure of ailments of persons and cattle. 'Masses' were read on the seashore to procure a supply of seaweed or fish. Still more gross superstition was found in the neighbouring island of Inniskea, where a stone idol was invoked for protection to the inhabitants and vengeance on their enemies. This image was carefully clothed in flannel, and when taken out for any special purpose was dressed in a new suit. On return to the house in which it had been lodged, it was warmed at the fire, and put into the comfortable bed allotted to it.

In 1831 the Western coast of Ireland was visited by a severe famine, occasioned by disastrous winds, which destroyed the potato crop. Measures were taken by the benevolent to relieve the appalling destitution, and vessels were freighted with provisions. In one of these the Rev. Edward Nangle sailed from Dublin to Westport and Achill, at the solicitation of a friend who was actively engaged in sending food for the famishing. This unexpectedly led to events of a very peculiar and interesting character. Achill, previously almost unknown to the outer world, became the scene of spiritual conflicts and exploits. 'During the last fifty years it has had a history so thrilling, so romantic, so full of incident, that one can only wonder how it has come to pass that it has so long escaped notice.' So writes the Rev. Dr. Seddall.

CHAPTER XV

THE following account of what is known as the Achill Colony and Settlement is taken substantially from a monthly periodical called the *Achill Herald*, which was conducted by Mr. Nangle for several years :

On the arrival in Connaught of Mr. Nangle, having heard of the extreme destitution of Achill, he determined to visit it. He was greatly affected with the spiritual destitution of the islanders, and as he stood in the midst of this long-neglected people, 'his spirit was stirred within him,' and he determined on making an effort to rescue them. The idea was suggested of establishing a mission among them on the plan pursued by the Moravian missionaries, and designed to further the temporal welfare of the natives in subserving to their higher interests. He received encouragement from the principal landed proprietor of the island by the promise of a lease of mountain ground at a nominal rent. This having been secured, a steward was engaged, and sent in the summer of 1833 to superintend the reclaiming of this land of 130 acres. The difficulties he encountered were enormous. A wild tract of moor had to be reclaimed and rendered productive ; houses were to be erected in the midst of a wilderness, without any means of communication with the civilized country but by the sea, which, in consequence of a boisterous climate and the want of a commodious landing-place, afforded but a precarious means of intercourse ; and the works were to be accomplished by the instrumentality of a people whose ignorance and prejudices might easily be so worked upon by designing men as to make them regard the growth of the infant settle-

ment with jealous enmity instead of considering it in the light of a benefit, either temporal or spiritual. But the work went on : houses were erected, a schoolmaster and several Scripture-readers were sent, and Mr. Nangle himself came to direct the entire proceedings. It was not till the summer of 1834 that matters were sufficiently matured for his permanent sojourn at the new settlement. The interval was principally spent in Ballina, the centre of a large district through which he used to preach in connection with the Home Mission, which was then carried on under the sanction of the last Protestant Bishop of Killala.

In the words of the *Achill Herald* : ' The missionary settlement has since grown into a village ; the sides of a once barren mountain are adorned with cultivated fields and gardens ; the desert literally rejoices, and blossoms as the rose, and the stillness of desolation which once reigned is broken by the hum of school or the sound of the ' church-going bell.' The Achill missionary settlement is indeed a proof of the truth of that memorable saying of John Eliot, that " Prayer and pains, through faith in Christ, can do anything." '

But the educatoinal and evangelistic efforts of Mr. Nangle, and his coadjutors were not allowed to proceed without molestation. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuam became alarmed, and a furious persecution was got up by the priests, under his auspices, aiming at the expulsion of the missionaries from the island. One priest's instructions to his flock regarding the ' jumpers ' were : ' Scald them, scold them, hunt them, shout after them persecute them to death, and pull down the houses over their heads.' The Archbishop landed in the island, accompanied by thirteen priests. One of them addressed the people who had been assembled to meet his Grace ; he told them that ' when cholera raged in the country the inhabitants beat from their borders with sticks and stones those who came from infected places.' The Protestant missionaries of Achill carried about with them in their religion a more deadly plague than the cholera, and therefore regard for their own safety should urge them to drive the agents

from the island. These admonitions were too faithfully acted on. The schoolmaster and Scripture-reader were assaulted; one was thrown into a pit, and when, bruised and enfeebled, he crawled out, he and his companions were pursued by the mob, who tried to overwhelm them with stones, those in the rear cursing the foremost ones for not 'overtaking the devils and killing them outright.' This, it is probable, would have been done had not a priest, in the exercise of a wise discretion, counselled the people not to take their lives as long as the Archbishop remained in the island, lest he should get the blame.

It did not end here. For two days these victims of intolerance were in danger of death; one of the rioters declared they were to be murdered and quartered. Happily by the aid of a few who were friendly, they managed to escape by night, and by a circuitous and dangerous course along the cliffs, reached the lighthouse, where next day they got on board a coastguard vessel, and thus were placed beyond the reach of their persecutors.

I will not give further details of similar doings, which were continued from time to time. In 1852 Miss Harriet Martineau visited Achill, and, while as a Unitarian the missionary operations had little interest for her, she could not refrain from indignantly expressing her sense of the outrageous conduct of the clerical leaders and their followers. A month previous she says: 'Dr. MacHale has been on the island, and left behind him two priests who are to be tried for assaults on the Scripture-readers.' One of them was convicted, and fined £5.

For several years the Mission continued to prosper. In 1861 the census returns showed the population to consist of 5,083 Roman Catholics, 649 Episcopalians, 37 Presbyterians, and 7 Methodists, being a total of 693 Protestants. This was certainly a large increase since the arrival of Mr. Nangle. Afterwards the success was not so marked, and a diminution in the members was found. Many of the converts had emigrated to Britain, to America, and Australia. Some joined the constabulary; others enlisted in the army. Some of these, and also of those who remained in Achill,

relapsed, but the great majority remained steadfast in the faith. In 1852 Mr. Nangle was promoted to the rectory of Skreen. It was arranged that he should spend three months of the year in Co. Sligo, but still continuing to take part in the general management of the Mission. His successors were worthy and zealous men, but from a variety of causes the advance has not kept pace with that of its earlier days. Yet in 1883 there were 208 connected with the Church. I am not in a position to give the statistics at the present date.

During his incumbency at Skreen Mr. Nangle engaged with great activity in various educational and evangelistic enterprises. He resigned the charge in 1873, owing to advanced age and increasing infirmities. His death took place in Dublin in 1883.

I had many opportunities of meeting with Mr. Nangle and of forming an estimate of his character. He was undoubtedly a man of deep personal piety, and animated with a burning zeal for the glory of God and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. I found him always most liberal in his views, with nothing of High-Churchism. He was thoroughly sound in his theology, and preached with plainness and power the truths of the Gospel. In controversy he was an adept, but sometimes indulged unduly in invective. His best friends admit his failings. He was impulsive, and obstinate to a degree in maintaining his opinions of men and matters, sometimes too rashly adopted. But he was a fearless champion of the truth, and was a man of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and therefore he was 'strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.' He found Achill a moral waste; he determined it should be reclaimed. So far as it was possible for him to do, he followed the advice of John Wesley. In a tract addressed to the Bishops and clergy of Ireland, after deploring the small progress of the Gospel, Mr. Wesley proposed 'a short method of converting all the Roman Catholics in the kingdom,' and this is his 'Short and sure method—Let all the clergy of the Church of Ireland only *live* like the Apostles and *preach* like the Apostles, and the thing is done.'

Another agency was, meanwhile, in vigorous operation, that of the Irish Church Missions, which was instituted in 1849, and whose inception was largely owing to the Rev. Alexander C. Dallas. This gentleman had been an officer in the army; he had gone through the campaigns of Wellington in the Peninsula, and was present at the crowning victory of Waterloo. In the providence and by the grace of God, he became a sincere follower of the great Captain of salvation; and, entering the ministry of the Established Church in England, was Rector of Winston, in Hants, for many years. He became deeply interested in the spiritual condition of Ireland, and adopted various plans for the promotion of the cause which lay so close to his heart. One was to issue several thousand packets of tracts through the post-office to respectable Roman Catholics throughout the kingdom. One of these tracts was entitled, 'A Voice from Heaven to Ireland.' This was in 1846. On the following St. Patrick's Day he sent a letter to every priest in the country urging them to head a movement to lead the people to light and liberty. The famine years opened up the way for a fresh departure; and in 1848 a society was formed for the enlightenment of the Irish Roman Catholics. Several thousand pounds were collected, and Mr. Dallas was a leading agent in managing the funds. He was appointed secretary of the Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics, and, while he lived, with heart and soul and unflagging energy he promoted their efficiency. He had many qualifications for the position. A man of fine presence and polished manners, his social position enabled him to present to the aristocracy and wealthy the cause he advocated. He could speak with effect, and, having full faith in his work, unhesitatingly urged its claims on every opportunity. He was a good business man, and had a clear eye to discern the right mode of operations, and a cool head to direct them in circumstances of perplexity and difficulty. Indeed, he carried into this movement very much of the military system of his early life, and directed the Scripture-readers and teachers as if they were an army, and he did regard them and himself

as 'soldiers of the cross.' The same calm and confident courage animated himself, with which he also sought to inspire his agents as if he were a general conducting a campaign.

The field which Mr. Dallas selected as the special scene of his operations was in the western part of Co. Galway, comprehending the wild and romantic region of Connemara, where, according to official returns, a very small percentage of the population could read, and for a distance of sixty miles there were only three Protestant churches. As to the results, these will be better given in the words of the present Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, written in 1863: 'In 1849 I accompanied the Bishop of Tuam on a tour of confirmation. On that occasion 460 converts were confirmed in Achill, and 401 in Connemara. Two years after, on a similar tour, the number of converts confirmed was 712. Since that period there have been four more confirmations held in the Moira districts, and the whole number of converts confirmed upon these six occasions, as officially reported, amounted to 3,090! Of this number, 2,042 belonged to Connemara.'

Writing in 1884, the Archbishop remarks: 'As regards the prospects of missionary success in the future, it is hard, humanly speaking, to speculate. In movements such as these there come ebbs and flows. Comparing the present time with some of those periods in the past to which reference has just been made, the tide of missionary progress so far as visible results are compared, would seem to be at the ebb. But we know not how soon a fresh current may set in. And who knows when it may please God to raise up some reformer amongst themselves. No limit must be put to His power. Meanwhile, it is our duty to work on in faith, proclaiming the truth with all plainness, but in a spirit of brotherly love and godly wisdom. And if, while seeking to quit ourselves as 'heroes in the mission field'—and our aim should be nothing less—we should find many difficulties and discouragements in our path, let us remember that one test of heroism is to battle on, even when victory seems furthest from our grasp.'

CHAPTER XVI.

HAVING in my last chapter referred to the missionary operations carried on by the then Established Church in Achill and Co. Galway, with which are associated the names of the Rev. E. Nangle and the Rev. A. C. Dallas, it will not be inopportune to notice a peculiar and remarkable effort of another kind and on different lines. I mean the British Evangelical Mission to Ireland, or, as it was more familiarly known, the mission of 'the *hundred* ministers,' in the summer of 1853. This movement originated in a suggestion of Dr. Edgar to the Evangelical Alliance, at its meeting in Dublin, that it should 'encourage and assist in the employment of the school, the press, and the pulpit for effecting reformation, according to the great catholic principles which the Alliance sanctions, and avoiding all sectarian rivalry and all mere proselytism to a sect.' In the consequent discussion it was proposed by one of the secretaries, Dr. Steane, a Baptist minister, that a 'united simultaneous effort should be made on the Romanism of Ireland by sending to it from England and Scotland a hundred ministers to preach for a month. This was agreed to, and the necessary pecuniary funds being supplied by Christian friends, and the required number of ministers of 'the various denominations' having offered their services, the project was carried out.

I confess the *modus operandi* did not commend itself to the judgment of Mr. Allen or myself. The secretary of the Alliance, with Mr. Henderson, of Park, and others, had visited Ballina and propounded their plans. We suggested that Connaught should be a sphere of a part of the enter-

prise, and offered to arrange for meetings throughout our mission districts, with the use of churches or school-houses. These offers were not accepted. Six counties were selected in Leinster and Munster, certainly not the most favourable for the purpose, and the services were to be conducted in the open air. The double experiment was to be made of preaching to Roman Catholics, and that not in a building, but in the public streets of the most Roman Catholic large towns. Besides this, every publicity had been given to the mission, and the priesthood were on the alert, and made preparations to encounter and counteract what they called this threatened invasion ; and in various ways they had successfully roused the passions of the multitude to a state of great excitement and fury. In these trying and adverse circumstances the experiment was made. After being commended in prayer to God at a meeting in Dublin, the Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, I believe, presiding, the missionaries left for the several places to which they had been allotted. They had in all the trains parties of priests and others, who went to proclaim their arrival and to organize opposition. The result was what I and others had expected. Everywhere they met with a very rough reception. They were hooted and hustled by infuriated mobs, who, not content with drowning the voices of the preachers by shouts and groans, proceeded to actual violence, and assailed them with volleys of stones and mud, and thus placed them in imminent peril of their lives. With difficulty they were rescued by the police and military. In a memorial of the Scottish Reformation Society to the Prime Minister, it was stated : ' Attacks have been made by furious mobs on certain ministers of the Gospel who had gone to preach in various parts of Ireland, and the civil authorities, instead of searching out the originators of these acts of violence and subjecting them to condign punishment, have simply declared themselves unable to keep the peace, and warned the ministers to leave the district.'

An address to the people of Ireland was published in the form of a tract, in the name of ' the hundred ministers,'

the purport of which will be gathered from the following extracts :

‘ Having had our attention very much directed to the spiritual condition of the people of Ireland, we came over to proclaim the message of our common salvation, and to ascertain for ourselves the actual state of things among you. We came not to delight ourselves in the beauty of your lakes and mountains, neither did we come to engage in controversial discussions, nor to speak evil of Church or priest, nor to accomplish any sectarian or political object. Our main desire was to point sinners to the ‘ Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.’ . . . Under the deep conviction that Roman Catholics do not understand the way of salvation, and that there are many Protestants in Ireland as well as in England who are as little impressed by the Gospel as if they had never heard it, we have been anxious to avail ourselves of every opportunity of speaking the truth in love to sinners of every name, and directing them to Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, as their only refuge and hope from the wrath to come. With this object in view, we were not so extravagant as to expect a joyous welcome from those who, as we know full well, were industriously taught to suspect our characters and motives ; but we did expect, after all that we had heard of your national love of justice and fair-play, to obtain at least a patient and attentive hearing. But, instead of this, in many places, as soon as we had opened our lips, we were assailed by stones and mud, and other offensive and dangerous missiles ; our efforts to speak were overwhelmed by yelling, hooting, and other indescribable noises ; we were exposed to every form of indignity and insult which the most malicious ingenuity could invent. In newspapers and placards the most opprobrious epithets were heaped upon us ; motives the most dishonourable were ascribed to us. Magistrates, in some places, refused us the protection of the law, declaring that they were unable to shield our persons from violence, and warning us to leave their neighbourhoods without delay, thus virtually surrendering their authority to the mob, and denying us that liberty of

speech which, as British subjects, we claim to be our inalienable right.'

'We have now found, from coming into contact with it, that Romanism loves darkness rather than light. It dreads free discussion. It refuses even to inquire. If we present the truth before it, it meets us with yells and execrations. If we stop to reason or argue, it seeks to cover us with mud, or to strike us down with stones. We return to our homes more deeply convinced than ever of the direct and irreconcilable hostility that exists between the spirit of the Church of Rome and the spirit of the Gospel. And we trust to be enabled to diffuse this impression more deeply and more widely through the several districts of England and Scotland in which we dwell, and to organize some more permanent association for bringing the Gospel of salvation before the minds of the Irish Roman Catholics. We return to our homes with the deep-felt desire and purpose, in the name and by the help of God, of lending the strenuous aid of our sympathies, prayers, and efforts to the evangelization of Ireland.'

Such were the sentiments and resolves of these British brethren after their experience of an evangelistic tour in the South of Ireland. On their return they held meetings all over England and Scotland, at which they gave an account of the exciting occurrences in which they had a part. It is said that a powerful and widespread impression was produced ; but, so far as I am aware, the project for forming a *united* association to promote the evangelization of Ireland took no practical form or shape. These good and earnest men were entirely composed of the Nonconformists of England and the non-established Churches of Scotland ; and I have thought it would be desirable in the present circumstances of our country were a similar deputation to come over now, not to accomplish any 'sectarian or political object,' but to 'point sinners to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.' Such an effort would be most appropriate on the part of those who have of late years manifested much sympathy with the masses of the Irish people. They might get a warm reception, and would

ascertain for themselves the present position and prospects of that 'liberty of speech which, as British subjects,' we Irish Protestants also 'claim as our inalienable right.' After the lapse of nearly forty years, it would be both interesting and instructive to know by actual experience whether or not the scenes of 1853 should again be enacted. By all means, let our British friends make the experiment. The field is as fair and promising as it was then—in Cork, city and county; in gallant Tipperary, old and new; as well as in fair Kilkenny.

I had purposed in this chapter to resume the narrative of my own proper work in Ballina, and of the progress of the Presbyterian cause; but I must defer this till the next. The story ought to be interesting, for few know anything of it, or are aware of the extraordinary opposition and trials we had to encounter from various and diverse quarters. There is a difficulty in giving a full and particular narrative without offence. But history is history, and truth is truth.

CHAPTER XVII

TO revert to my own affairs. After long delays and many difficulties, the Ballina Church was formally opened for public worship in July, 1851. For this purpose the veteran Dr. Cooke made another journey to Connaught. This he did very much as a personal compliment to myself, which I appreciated as I should. It was no easy matter to make such a journey at his time of life, and with the tedious and uncomfortable mode of locomotion, which was mainly by the Bianconi. Yet he did it, preaching and taking up collections at several towns on the route. He was accompanied, as on the former occasion, by his faithful friend, Mr. David Ker Clarke. The two services on the Sabbath were conducted with marvellous vigour and power, and he fully sustained his character as an able and eloquent preacher of the Gospel. The attendance comprised the most respectable members of the Episcopalian and Methodist communities, as well as our own. The collection realized a handsome sum, although the church was not opened free of debt. On the contrary, it was the work of years to clear the liabilities then contracted, to say nothing of the amount subsequently expended on enlargements and improvements. The church and schoolhouse buildings were completed at this time, but the manse was unfinished, though I entered upon the occupation of it when the lower parts of the house only were habitable ; but we cheerfully put up with such discomforts, being really rejoiced at having a home that we could call our own.

My friends took this opportunity of presenting me with

an address, accompanied with a gift, which took the suitable and substantial form of furniture for the manse. This was the first of many similar gratifying expressions of their goodwill and esteem. One of the articles, a handsome sideboard, has on the front a silver plate, with the inscription :

PRESENTED TO

THE REVEREND THOMAS ARMSTRONG.

A HUMBLE TOKEN OF

Approbation, Sympathy, and Affection, from the Members of the
Congregation, and a few Friends.

BALLINA, *March*, 1851.

The terms 'approbation' and 'sympathy' require a word of explanation. At this time I had been subjected to a considerable amount of trouble and annoyance. Owing, probably, to envy and jealousy at the progress of Presbyterianism, some of the Episcopalian clergy had given public expression to their sentiments in a disparaging manner as to our status as a Church. They had also persistently refused the rights of sepulture in the parish graveyard. A discussion ensued in the local newspapers, in the course of which I had to vindicate our position and to expound our principles and polity, as well as to expose the narrow and illiberal spirit manifested toward us. In this controversy I was cheered and sustained by the confidence and approval of my people.

Contemporaneous with this, there was a rencontre with the Roman Catholic Administrator of the parish. This gentleman had taken mortal offence at our educational efforts, and had made repeated attempts to banish the children attending my school. In addition to the more spiritual weapons of the confessional and altar denunciation, he employed physical force in the form of the horse-whip and cudgel. On one occasion he came into collision with myself, and committed an assault on my person. For this, however, he had to apologize, and promise to abstain for the future from all illegal violence. These and other similar matters were discussed in the local newspaper, the

priest trying to defend his conduct, and appealing in support of priestly flagellation to the authority and example of the Saviour when cleansing the Temple! The affair attracted the attention of the London press and of the authorities, and caused much local excitement. At a future time I may have occasion to refer at greater length to the opposition we had to encounter, and the various annoyances to which we were exposed from more than one quarter. I content myself now with an expression of my deep sense of the manly part taken by the congregation, and of the noble manner in which they rallied on my side, to strengthen my hands and cheer my heart with their highly-valued and cherished testimony of their 'approbation, sympathy, and affection.'

Opposition to our cause, both congregational and educational, came from another quarter, though in a different form, and without, of course, personal violence. The Episcopal clergy manifested from the outset exceeding jealousy of our operations, and intimated pretty plainly their opinion that there was no room and no need for a settled Presbyterian congregation in Ballina. They were doubtless irritated at the fact of several of their respectable adherents, who had, in want of a regular Presbyterian service, attended the parish church, but who now came back to their own kirk to worship God in the simple and Scriptural form which their consciences approved. They were also astounded at my audacity in asserting my perfect equality with them, though theirs was the Established Church, and in taking my proper position at meetings of the Hibernian Bible Society and in other places which I regarded as common ground. I thought that a Presbyterian bishop was on a par with either rector or curate, dean or archdeacon. Some of them had, indeed, sense and courtesy enough to acknowledge the rights I claimed, but others were too high and mighty to stoop to such condescension. Disestablishment had not yet loomed in the future, and they looked down on all Dissenters—a term, however, which I utterly repudiated as not at all applicable to a branch of the Church of Scotland. Our educational efforts

were also regarded with jealousy, as several of their young folk preferred to attend ours instead of the parochial school. Another cause of disputes arose in connection with burials. I considered that I was quite competent to discharge all ecclesiastical duties for my people, and they were of the same opinion. But our friends the Episcopal clergy thought that, as Presbyterians would not attend their preaching nor partake of the sacraments with them, they would at least insist on burying them according to the rites of the Prayer-Book. One rector was more liberal, for, as he said to myself, 'I will not contend for the bodies of those who would have nothing to say to me as long as they were living.' He did this with Roman Catholics also, yet he was a strong Protestant and an Orangeman. The state of the law at that time gave them the power of preventing a minister of another Church from officiating at the grave in any burial-ground over which they had control. That law has since been modified, so that on application they cannot refuse to give the required permission. Apart from other considerations, it was desirable to have such an opportunity of speaking some words to those who came to the funeral, for Roman Catholics as well as Protestants would listen attentively while we proclaimed simply the glorious Gospel, and pointed to Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, and the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

The prohibition of me to officiate was bad enough, but their insisting on forcing their services on those who did not want or wish for them, and excluding their own minister, was, I considered, putting a brand of inferiority on me which I could not brook, and I was determined to bring matters, which were sufficiently strained, to a crisis. In this I was cordially sustained by my people, and also by the Episcopalian laity, who were thoroughly evangelical and liberal in their views.

Suitable opportunities soon presented themselves. At the grave of a young man, when the time came those present uncovered, expecting to hear me. I simply remarked in a sad tone : 'I am sorry to say that the rector has prohibited me from either giving an address, reading

the Scriptures, or offering up prayer.' It caused a sensation. Soon after a lady died who was a relative of some leading families in the Episcopalian community. Her surviving sister, at my suggestion, wrote to the rector, asking permission for me to officiate at the grave. The rector, in his reply, utterly ignored the application, and simply said he or one of his curates would officiate. The lady, of her own accord, promptly wrote that, as her own minister would not be allowed, no other should, and forbade him or his curate to conduct any service. I thought this had settled the matter, but to my amazement, on arriving at the churchyard, the rector appeared in full canonicals. This was unusual with him, as he generally left all these and other duties to his curates. But there was a purpose to serve. However, recovering from my surprise, I said to those present, 'Before proceeding into the church, hear me.' I then read the correspondence between the rector and the lady, without a word of comment. The result was that not an individual went into the church, nor attended the service at the grave. The Episcopalians were loud and vehement in their indignant protests against such intolerance.

Another case occurred. An old and respectable and respected member of ours, an ordained elder, died. He had managed the affairs of the rector's father, the last Protestant Bishop of Killala, to his entire satisfaction. It was thought that the rector in this case would make some concession. But no! The burial service must be read at the grave by the curate. The son of the deceased, a worthy Christian man and a sturdy Presbyterian, would not submit. Accordingly, at considerable inconvenience, he had the remains conveyed to an old and almost disused burial-ground at a distance, where, of course, I officiated without let or hindrance.

Several other occurrences of the same kind took place, while in marked contrast several of the clergy manifested a most kind and liberal spirit. But these, with the account of the happy issue of such troubles, must be reserved till another chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE proceedings mentioned in the last chapter attracted a good deal of attention and caused much excitement, and there appeared articles and letters on both sides in the local and provincial press. Indeed, one newspaper, evidently under a certain inspiration, was vehement against our cause. One of the weekly issues had more than half of its columns occupied with leading articles and anonymous letters. But I had an advantage. Having at the time control of the other newspaper of the town, I had full opportunity of replying, and as it was published the day after the other one, I contrived each week to have the last word. I knew that I had, on the whole, public opinion on my side, and bided my time. Matters became strained, and I was waited on by a neighbouring rector, an old schoolfellow of mine, who deplored in suitable terms this unseemly strife between Protestants, and said he had come to propose a compromise and settlement of the vexed question. 'I am delighted,' I said; 'but what are the terms?' 'Well,' he replied, 'I was lately in the North at the funeral of a Presbyterian. The minister conducted a service at the house, and it occurred to me that you should do the same; and would it not be a courteous act on your part to ask the rector to have the usual service in the church and at the grave?' My reply was: 'As to the first point, having a service in the house of one of my own congregation, I require neither instruction nor authority from anyone. As to the second, I will be delighted to ask the rector to conjoin with me at the funeral of a Presbyterian, provided that he asks me to take part

in the service at the funeral of the first Episcopalian who has died.' 'Oh no, that cannot be.' 'Well,' I said, 'that is a kind of reciprocity I do not understand or appreciate; and now I will tell you what I have resolved on. At the next melancholy occasion, when the procession arrives at the gate, I will send in the general public to the churchyard. The coffin will be laid down in the street; I will read the rector's prohibition, and conduct my service surrounded by the relatives of the deceased, the only difference being that they and I, with the remains, will be outside and the audience inside the railings, where they can see and hear everything. I tell you, the effect will be that you and your party will be brought to your senses by your own people, whose sympathy and support we are assured of.' The man was rather frightened, and left in a not very enviable state of mind. Not long after I was waited on with the information that, at a general meeting of the clergy, it had been agreed that no obstacle for the future would be put in my way. I expressed my gratification at this happy issue, with the earnest hope that nothing in future would occur to interrupt the harmony which ought to prevail among Protestants.

It is only fair to say that a different course was followed by others of the clergy. One, who was a gentleman by birth and property, a true Christian, with the rank of a dean, resident in an adjoining parish, when I made the usual request for permission to have service at the grave of one of my hearers, replied expressing regret at the melancholy event, and the wish that I should never again take the trouble of writing to him on such a matter, but carry out my arrangements as I pleased. He was indeed a Christian and a gentleman.

Since that period I have been on the best of terms with my Episcopalian brethren, and have enjoyed the friendship of many of them, co-operating cordially in various good causes, and esteeming one another very highly in love. Occasionally matters would occur having a tendency to promote dissension and strife, but I generally found that by a combination of firmness and forbearance the causes of

irritation and annoyance would be removed, and goodwill and harmony restored.

Our school operations attracted the unfavourable attention of the Roman Catholic party. Not only in Ballina was this so, but wherever one of our schools was opened, there, by altar denunciation, the dread power of the confessional, and actual violence by priestly hands, the most fierce and vigorous efforts were employed to deter the children from attendance, and thus exterminate the schools. The neighbours were instigated and encouraged to give every annoyance, and brutal outrages were perpetrated on the persons of boys and girls, and on their parents. It was no uncommon thing for a priest to burst into a school, brandish his horsewhip in the face of the alarmed teacher, and flog the little ones out of the place. From the altar the most fearful denunciations were hurled at any who would send their children to a Bible school, and they were held up to scorn and exposed to danger in this world, while they were consigned to the horrors of hell in the future. The vilest epithets were heaped on ministers and teachers. Persecution was not limited to the Presbyterians; every Protestant mission in Ireland, Episcopal, Baptist, and other agencies, have suffered more or less in this way. Converts from Romanism were denounced and subjected to the most cruel wrongs. The basest and most illegal means were used to stop the march of reformation. In one district, wrote the Hon. Baptist Noel, 'Nine hundred Scripture-readers were employed, and the greater number of them have been beaten or otherwise persecuted. Some have been savagely murdered, their only crime being their endeavour to guide others to the truth which they had found precious to themselves.'

At this time there was a Roman Catholic clergyman in Ballina who was noted for his brutal treatment of all who came under his displeasure for any offence, moral or spiritual. He was, I doubt not, sincere and earnest in trying to put a stop to immorality and vice, though the sin which especially aroused his wrath was the reading or teaching of the Bible. It could not be said that 'the

weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but spiritual.' The blackthorn stick or horsewhip was his favourite instrument. I myself have seen him in broad daylight, in the most public part of the town, flagellate a wretched creature in the most cruel manner, and then, pulling out of his pocket a large pair of scissors, cut off her hair to the skull, and fling the flowing tresses into the mud. No one of the bystanders did or dared to interfere. He was nicknamed 'The Clipper,' from his practice of clipping with scissors the hair of the objects of his displeasure, and he gloried in his doings, parading himself as the putter-down of vice and promoter of morality. The worst of all vices, however, in his eyes was, as I have said, the reading or teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Accordingly, my school became the object of his special displeasure. He visited the houses of the children, denounced them and the parents, and used his horsewhip not lightly on their persons. One aged woman, and bed-ridden, he beat black and blue (I saw the marks on her poor body), and he dragged her from her bed by her gray hairs to the floor. One morning he went to the school to disperse it. Taking up a position near the entrance, he drove the children away. I confronted him, and warned him that he was breaking the law by such acts. 'I don't care a ——'—indeed, he used a very strong word—'for you or the law,' and continued to beat the children. Some of them taking shelter in a recess in the wall, he put his hand on my shoulder, and flogged them over my head. In striking a little girl who tremblingly had clung to my side, his whip came in contact with my own hand. This blow, though not intended for myself, was an assault in law, as he had been committing an illegal act at the time. I put the case into the hands of a solicitor, and notice of an action at law was served on him. But he was a coward, after all, and made overtures for a settlement, which I accepted, knowing full well that no matter how clear the case—as in that of Dr. Dill—no verdict could be had from a jury against a priest, especially when the question of religion was concerned. The terms were that he should allow an apology to be inserted in the local

newspaper, and that he should promise to beat neither man, woman, nor child for the remainder of his days. I am not very sure that he kept his promise. He published a letter in the newspaper, arguing for the right and duty of priests to inflict what he called salutary discipline upon offenders against the laws of the Church. He bitterly complained that the town was in a fearful condition of immorality, vice, and crime, because he was prevented by his promise from using the only effectual means of dealing with such characters, and asserted that his conduct had been only after the example of our blessed Lord in driving the people out of the Temple with the scourge of small cords.

This letter attracted considerable attention. It was commented on in proper terms by the London press, and the case was brought under the notice of Sir Duncan M'Gregor, at that time the head of the Irish Constabulary. By his order the chief of the Ballina police called on us both, stating that he had got instructions to afford me and the poor people due protection in asserting and maintaining the rights of conscience, and would, in case of any violence, arrest the priest as he would any other breaking the law. This noble action served a salutary purpose. I also announced in the newspaper that I had means of obtaining information throughout the province, and would expose every case of the kind. This, too, had a deterrent influence, and largely contributed to bring to an end these audacious acts. For my part in the matter I received expressions of thanks from many of the respectable and intelligent Roman Catholics, who had been thoroughly ashamed of such conduct. This, however, was private and confidential, as they dared not venture publicly to protest against their own clergy, who were, moreover, it appeared, acting by the directions, or with the tacit approval, of their highest ecclesiastical authority.

CHAPTER XIX

THE congregations in the Connaught Presbytery now on the roll of the General Assembly number thirteen.

Of these five were in existence before the commencement of my narrative—namely, taking them in alphabetical order, Ballymoate, Killala, Sligo, Turlough, and Westport. Since then the following have been formed: Ballina, Ballinglen, Boyle, Clogher, Creevelea, Dromore West, Hollymount, and Newport. To this ought fairly to be added Castlebar, the county town of Mayo, which, however, has been subsequently united to a neighbouring old congregation, under the conjoint title of Turlough and Castlebar. Some of these owe their origin to the fact of immigration of Scottish and Ulster Presbyterians, attracted by the openings presented to agriculturists after the famine years or by the prospect of trade and business in our towns. Others were largely the result of direct mission aggressive effort through the schools and kindred agencies. As an example and illustration of the latter class, I can give no better case than Clogher, whose early history, especially, is invested with no small amount of interest, if not romance. Clogher may be regarded as a hamlet, within a few miles of Ballaghaderin, and is situated on the confines of three counties—Roscommon, Mayo, and Sligo—but actually in the latter, in the barony of Coolavin, which barony was formerly the principality of a Sept, the MacDermotts, whose present head is locally known as the Prince of Coolavin, but ordinarily as ‘the Macdermott.’ The region is largely a sheet of bog, interspersed with a series of mountains, and especially the parts extending into Mayo are

prevailingly bleak and desolate. The educational and intellectual condition of the population will be understood by the returns from the census immediately preceding, in 1841, which are : Males and females at and above five years of age who could read and write, 1,704 ; who could read, but not write, 1,089 ; who could neither read nor write, 5,913. The religious statistics appear to be : Protestants, 406 ; Roman Catholics, 14,573. I shall wait with interest the census returns of fifty years later—now, in 1891. The immediate neighbourhood of Clogher itself presents a better and more cultivated appearance than what has been now described. The view from the site of our church premises across the demesne towards Lough Gara, with its cultivated islands and indented shores, is of a very pleasing character.

From this place, the residence of the Holmes family, there came to Dr. Edgar and the Belfast Ladies' Association, in the latter end of 1847, an application for a female teacher to conduct an industrial school. The writer was Miss Elizabeth Holmes, sister of the owner of the property. But the application caused some perplexity. The name of the post-town, Ballaghaderin, was unpronounceable by the ladies ; their knowledge of Connaught geography did not enable them to fix its locality, while the handwriting was so peculiar as made it impossible to determine who or what the writer might be. Indeed, the doctor styled it 'a patriarchal writing,' and was greatly amazed and amused to learn from herself afterwards that she was a middle-aged, unmarried lady, and not 'the great grandmother' he had supposed her to be. Miss Holmes then increased her demands, asking not only for an industrial female teacher, but also for a preacher. The doctor told her that he was a 'black-mouthed Presbyterian,' and warned her of the storm of troubles she would be subjected to from her own High-Church clergy if she received and countenanced a preacher of that sort. But she persisted, and obtained her desire. Preachers and teachers were sent, and in due time a minister was ordained. For three years divine service was held, on successive Sabbaths, by the Revs. John Hall, T. Y. Killen, and John Dewart.

Miss Holmes secured from her brother an eligible site in a beautiful and commanding position, on which she erected a suite of buildings, at an expense of £2,000, comprising a church, manse, schoolhouse, with other accommodations, including a residence for herself and also for the teachers. This valuable property, including two acres of land, is held free of rent in perpetuity, and gives a prominence and a permanence to our cause where previously the very name of Presbyterianism was utterly unknown.

The first settled pastor in Clogher was the Rev. John Barnett,* afterwards of Carlow, and now of Katesbridge, Co. Down. He had formed one of that band of divinity students of whom I have already written, who used to meet together, to pray and labour for their country's welfare. At the request of Dr. Edgar, he resolved to devote himself to Connaught, and Clogher was chosen as the sphere of his labours. The students had also elected to take it up, and at the close of the session 1850-51 Mr. Barnett was appointed as their first missionary to Clogher. It is a rather curious coincidence that his birthplace was at another Clogher, in Co. Tyrone.

It was soon found that Mr. Barnett was eminently fitted for such a place. His earnestness, activity, and judiciousness commended him to all, and it was, accordingly, with great pleasure and satisfaction that the Connaught Presbytery arranged to carry out the appointment of the Board of Mission Directors by his ordination. On October 5, 1852, Mr. Barnett was ordained as missionary in the Clogher district—*missionary*, for as yet it was not a regularly organized congregation. The services were conducted by the Rev. Hamilton Magee, who preached; by myself, who explained and defended the system of Presbyterian Church government and order; the Rev. Dr. Johnston, of Tullylish, the uncle of Mr. Barnett, and the Rev. Robert Allen, the latter of whom offered up the ordination prayer, and Dr. Johnston gave the charge. The names of my brethren are a sufficient guarantee that the services were ably conducted. For my own part, I may be allowed to say that I aimed to make the

* Since died.

statement on Presbyterianism rather expository than controversial—a defence, and not an offence; and I have reason to believe that then, as on other occasions, it was so appreciated. In the evening a missionary meeting was held when the Rev. James Glasgow delivered a very interesting address on the evangelization of India. On the previous day the schools of the Clogher district had been examined in the Scriptures and shorter catechism by Messrs. Johnston and Allen, who bore testimony that the answering would do credit to any school in Ulster, though the children had been nearly all Roman Catholics.

Mr. Barnett continued in charge of Clogher till his removal to Carlow in 1856. I greatly regretted his departure, as I thoroughly appreciated him as a friend and fellow-labourer. Miss Holmes also was much grieved at his leaving. He was followed in succession by the Revs. James Megaw, S. Johnston, and S. L. Harrison. The present minister is the Rev. J. S. Smith,* who, like Mr. Barnett, also hails from Clogher, Co. Tyrone.

During her life Miss Holmes continued to manifest the deepest interest in all that concerned the mission and congregation of which she may be rightly regarded as the founder, and showed no small kind attention to the several ministers in succession. She was a Christian lady in the best sense of the term, and I was happy to be numbered among her friends. She died on June 9, 1877, and her remains were appropriately deposited in the aisle of the church which owed its existence to her benevolent efforts, and in front of the pulpit, where a slab is inscribed with the simple record :

‘ELIZABETH HOLMES.

1877.’

Instead of giving in my own words my estimate of Miss Holmes, I reproduce the notice in the *Missionary Herald* of February, 1878, by the Convener of the Irish Mission, the Rev. John Macnaughtan :

‘Another true friend of Ireland—a generous supporter

* Since died.

of her mission enterprises—has passed away ; but she has left behind the fragrance of a well-spent life. If it be true that religious emotions are the flower and religious deeds the fruit of Christianity, then the beauty of the believer's life was richly, though unostentatiously, exemplified in Elizabeth Holmes : love to Christ and labour for Christ were the blossom and the fruit that adorned her character. Her religion was indeed a reality ; it was at once her business and her pleasure.

‘ When Ireland was passing through the terrible calamity of the famine years, she was found at her post, dispensing charity with no stinted hand, and, in union with other members of her family, devising and carrying out schemes of benevolence to mitigate the sore evils of that trying period. These efforts made a deep impression on the community around her dwelling, and gave her that influence for good which she largely improved in after years. In connection with the late Dr. Edgar, she was very instrumental in establishing industrial schools, and in providing remunerative work for the neglected females of Ireland ; but her exertions were not limited to the walks of philanthropy. She cared for the souls of her countrymen, and, as she had found peace beneath the shadow of the cross, she sought to lead all around her to that Saviour who was to her so very precious. She was the life and soul of the mission at Clogher. During her lifetime she had the privilege of welcoming many converts from the Church of Rome into the fold of Jesus, and before she died, through the kind and generous sympathy of her brother, Joseph Holmes, Esq., she saw that mission endowed with a grant of land, and equipped with manse, school, church, and other buildings, fitted to render the mission work useful and successful. There is much to be learned from such a life. True, it does not present us with any magnificent works at which the world gazes with wonder ; but it occupies itself with the thousand unobtrusive modes of doing good to those around us that Providence daily presents, and it leaves behind it the record of labour for the Master, carried out with humble, simple, self-denying activity.

' The end of such a life was in exact harmony with the faith that guided and upheld it; the seen but silent beauty of personal holiness that had preached so powerfully to others the value of salvation resulted in a manifest ripening of the seed of grace, and in a peaceful gathering of the shock of corn into the granary of God. Over such a death-scene, sublime in its very calmness, we may exclaim, with dying Samuel Rutherford, "Glory, glory, glory! dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. The lesson is for the living. A holy life and a happy death. These act upon each other. He who would be happy in death must be holy in life!" Here is the patience of the saints. '

CHAPTER XX

BEFORE parting from Clogher, there are a few incidents which I desire to record. The mission premises, as I have mentioned, were conveyed in trust for one shilling per annum to the Irish Presbyterian Church, for the sole purposes of education and religious worship, according to the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly, by Miss Holmes—a member of the Episcopal Church—on whose plans and at whose sole cost they were erected. A worthy friend of mine—an ardent advocate of the cause of the Irish Mission—visited the place in 1865, and wrote saying : ‘ We had the pleasure of meeting the donor of this munificent gift, and I said, “ The Presbyterian Church is deeply indebted to you for all this ;” to which she replied in a most Christian spirit, “ And I am much indebted to the Presbyterian Church.” ’ Her generosity was the outcome and evidence of the gratitude she cherished for the spiritual benefits she had received.

During the famine times the Holmes family were very active in administering to the wants of the starving people with food, and also with clothing and medicine. Their kindness was much appreciated by those who experienced it, yet on the part of some there was a very ungrateful and ungenerous return. The life of Mr. Joseph Holmes was imperilled, and he had got the customary warning—or rather threat—from the midnight legislators’ executive that his days were numbered. It was an evil time. The country was much disturbed, and several assassinations were perpetrated. Captain Holmes, a younger member of the family, had been serving with his regiment in London

when he heard that the death-notice was served on his elder brother because he had violated the laws of the midnight legislators. He immediately started, and arrived in Ballaghaderin on one of the holidays of the Church of Rome. Having first ascertained that his brother was alive, and as yet not attacked, he waited on the priest, and requested permission to address the people after Mass. This was reluctantly granted, and he arrived some time before the appointed hour, but found the congregation was dispersing. He told the people that it had been arranged he should speak to them, and brought them back to the chapel, and then, standing near the altar, he spoke to the following effect : ' My countrymen, you know me since I was a boy ; you also know my family for a long time. You know how my sisters acted in the time of the famine ; how, when the servants were worn out with baking, they not only baked bread themselves, but carried it to your houses ; you know how they provided clothing for you in winter, medicine when you were sick, and education for your children.' ' We know all that,' was the reply of his audience. ' Well, and what is the return you make ? You have threatened to shoot the brother of these ladies, who were your friends in time of need, and himself your friend too. Is that your gratitude ? Is that like Irishmen ? But I came not here this day to blame you, but to tell you in his presence — pointing to the priest—' that he is at the bottom of it all. And I swear now before the altar of God that if a hair of my brother's head is injured, I will shoot that man.' ' I must explain,' said his reverence, whose utterance was almost choked with surprise, rage, and wrath. ' I want no explanation,' said the young soldier ; ' but know this, that if my brother is killed I will shoot you.' Then, addressing the people, ' That is all I have got to say, and now you may go home.' The result was that a valuable life was saved, while others in similar peril fell by the hands of assassins. It was a very bold and courageous procedure, if not rash and hazardous in the extreme ; but it accomplished the object in view. He was unaccompanied to the chapel, with the exception of the Scripture-reader, who, however,

had not been made aware of his purpose, or what he was about to say or do, and was considerably astounded at the procedure. On leaving the place, he said to Captain Holmes, 'Were you not afraid?' 'See that'—showing a revolver; 'if I had been attacked, I would have shot the priest dead on the spot—even on the altar.' Had he done so, it is fearful even to think of the tragic scene which would have been enacted that day in the chapel near Ballaghaderin.

The Scripture-reader mentioned, John Rowland, had been appointed by the Rev. John Barnett as a colporteur—in fact, the first colporteur in connection with the Irish Mission in Connaught. I think this is a noteworthy fact, and honour should be given where honour is due. Mr. Barnett saw that the time and opportunity had come for such an agency, and I therefore regard him as a forerunner in a work which has since been developed, not only as a department of the Irish Mission, but also as the distinguishing work of the non-denominational and most worthy Bible and Colportage Society for Ireland, to which I wish every success and blessing from the Lord.

It is right here to mention that there were at this period and subsequently several lay-agents in connection with our Church. These were, however, simply *Scripture-readers* in the ordinary acceptance of the term. They did really circulate religious literature and distribute copies of the Scriptures, but they did not *sell* books, partly because the time had not come for such an effort, and partly because they were not really fitted for, or disposed to act in that capacity. In my mind, however, they did good service for the cause of Christ. They were *evangelists* properly so speaking. They visited the humble homes of the people, spoke to them in simple language of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and, without controversy or direct reference to dogmatic differences, showed the one and only way of salvation by faith in the finished work of the Saviour. They read portions of the Word of God, most of them in that Irish tongue they knew so well, and which was so dear to, and affected so touchingly, the hearts of their hearers.

In the same language they spoke and prayed to God through the one Mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus. Some of them had marvellous gifts of fluent speaking and of earnest prayer. Their influence was all for good, and I have abundant reason to know that their ‘labours were not in vain in the Lord.’ These good and godly men were mostly originally of the Roman Catholic Church, and, having first given themselves to Christ, they joined our Presbyterian Church, which they served by their lives and example and work. They have nearly all gone to their rest and reward ; some of them have left descendants in our Church and in other churches, and I cherish a most agreeable memory of those who have gone.

The circumstances and conditions of the country have greatly altered since those early days of the Mission, and perhaps the machinery and agency which were then so suitable and adapted to the needs of the country may not be so effective now. Yet—while I must thoroughly recognise the value and importance of colportage in the selling of copies of the Word of God and sound religious literature, accompanied, as I know it is, with more special evangelistic teaching—I may be allowed to say that in the olden days a great and blessed work was accomplished by men who had no books to sell among people who had no money to buy, and without sufficient education to read for themselves. But since that era the schoolmaster has been abroad ; education has spread, and is spreading ; consequently, the facilities for colportage work are proportionately increased.

CHAPTER XXI

I N the order of time I should have given my experiences of *Westport* and its ministers before this, but I have not been able to take up events chronologically in all cases. However, that is not necessary for my purpose.

On my appointment by the Board of Missionary Directors as supply for Ballina, my friend and father in the ministry—the Rev. John Bleckley, of Monaghan—strongly recommended me to look after Westport. He had been there previous to the ordination of the first minister, and thought so much of the place and people that he considered it, as being an organized congregation, a far more desirable settlement than Ballina, which was then only a mission station. Accordingly, I did visit it, but before my arrival the people had made choice of the Rev. David Adair, who had been supplying it for some weeks. Thus, I never preached in Westport as a candidate, and my first sermon was on the occasion of the ordination of Mr. Adair, which took place on May 8, 1846, two days after my own ordination in Ballina.

Westport is a town of some importance, and has a population of nearly 5,000 inhabitants. The town's site is part of a small valley, traversed by a stream, which flows into Clew Bay, about a mile distant. The valley is nearly surrounded by high hills, so that all the roads leading into Westport are a considerable descent. The principal streets are ranged on either side of the river, whose banks are planted with rows of trees—the lime-tree and the poplar—which overshadow two pleasant walks, called the North and South Mall. At the extremity of the former is the

entrance-gate to the demesne of the Marquis of Sligo, into which there is free access at all times. On the South Mall stands a Roman Catholic chapel, bearing on its front the singular, if not appropriate, inscription, '*This is an awful place.*'

In the distance Croagh Patrick, or, as it is commonly called, the Reek, springs from the shore, lifting its conical head 2,510 feet above the sea, and looking, according to the Rev. Cæsar Otway, as if it was solving 'a problem in conic sections.' Westport is a seaport, and has a considerable amount of business; it was once a very flourishing seat of the linen trade. On the occasion of my visit, being a market day, I noticed about 100 pieces of linen brought in by the weavers, the principal buyer being Mr. Pinkerton, a member of our Church, originally from the Co. Derry. Some twenty years previously as many as 900 webs were measured and sold on a market day. But this industry has now almost disappeared.

The inception of a Presbyterian congregation took place in the year 1821, though in the earlier part of the century occasional services had been conducted by the Rev. James Hall, minister of Turlough. The attention of the Dublin Presbytery being called to the case, on inquiry by a deputation appointed for the purpose, a number of ministers of position were sent as supplies. Among these were the Rev. Henry Cooke, the Rev. John Bleckley, of Monaghan; the Rev. John Johnston, of Tullylish; and the Rev. Henry Dobbin, of Lurgan; thus manifesting the interest taken by the Synod of Ulster on behalf of our Presbyterian settlers in the far West. The congregation was organized by the Synod in 1823, and on December 23 in the same year Mr. Robert Creighton, a licentiate of the Tyrone Presbytery, was ordained the first minister at Westport by the Presbytery of Dublin. The officiating ministers were the Rev. James Horner, of Dublin; the Rev. James Morgan, of Carlow; and the Rev. James Hall, of Turlough. One part of the proceedings would be thought very strange now, and the practice had become obsolete; this was, the administering the oath of allegiance to the new minister which was done by the

Marquis of Sligo and his agent, Mr. Glendinning. Both of these attended the service, and also the Marchioness and the Rev. Mr. Walker—a godly and evangelical clergyman of the Established Church. The services appear to have made a deep impression on all the audience. The Marquis was especially affected by the sermon of Mr. Morgan, and subsequently asked him to take up his abode and exercise his ministry in Westport, offering to make him a liberal provision for his support. This proposal, however, was respectfully declined by Mr. Morgan.

In the autobiography of Dr. Morgan he gives a graphic account of his journey from Carlow, where he then resided, to Dublin, and thence to Westport. Though it was the Christmas season, and the weather bitterly cold with keen frost, he had to travel outside the coach, owing to his liability to sickness if journeying inside. The distance from Dublin is about 134 miles. At the last stage from Castlebar the night was very dark, but the coachman drove fearlessly on, though there was no fence on either side of the road. Being asked why he had not lighted the lamps, he replied they were unnecessary, as the four horses had only one eye among them. The return journey was equally unpleasant. I have had something of a similar experience myself. On my arrival in Ballina, there was not a mile of railway between it and Dublin, and the journey was partly made by coach and partly by the canal. When the railway was partially opened, I have gone upwards of 100 miles on the top of a coach in midwinter, travelling all night. The present generation know little of such hardships, though the Bianconi long car is still an institution in the counties of Mayo and Sligo.

Mr. Creighton died in 1834, and was succeeded by the Rev. James Smith, a Scotchman, who was ordained in 1837. When the disruption of the Church of Scotland took place, he left for his native country, having received a presentation to a parish of the establishment. This occurred in the close of 1845, a few weeks before my arrival in Connaught. His successor, the Rev. David Adair, who came from the congregation of Drumlee, Rathfield

Presbytery, I had known at college, and rejoiced to welcome him as a co-presbyter. He had been long noted for his simple-minded and earnest piety, and in Westport his Christian character and devotedness secured for him the respect and affection of all. There were many difficulties to be contended with. The congregation had been decreasing for some years, and the people were widely and sparsely scattered from Achill on the one side to Connemara on the other, entailing a large amount of toil and hardship in the work of visiting and preaching. Moreover, the place was a hotbed of Plymouthism, or Darbyism, as it was there called. One of its leaders was a well-known author among them. He and others caused much trouble and anxiety to Mr. Adair ; but he possessed his soul in patience, and carried on his ministrations in the spirit of faith and prayer.

Having under his charge three mission schools at that period, under the superintendence of the Rev. Robert Allen, he had trials peculiar to that kind of work. Opposition from the Episcopalian party was rather vigorous, and a school was started against ours, which had been very large and flourishing, so that the cause of education and truth was injured in the face of the common enemy. In the case of another school, opposition of another kind and from another quarter was characteristically manifested. The priest having denounced it from the altar, one night some of his emissaries entered the house, and tore or destroyed every copy of the Word of God they could lay their hands on ; nothing else was injured, showing most plainly and painfully the bitter enmity which these parties were taught to cherish against the blessed Book of God.

After a ministry of nearly nine years Mr. Adair died of small-pox on November 17, 1854, after a painful illness of seven days, in the fortieth year of his age. His wife, who had been a member of an old and respectable family in the neighbourhood, predeceased him five months, leaving three children—two girls, and the youngest a boy, whose birth had cost his mother her life. Almost prostrated by his sad bereavement, he seemed to desire to live only for the sake of his children. Many a prayer did his Christian

heart breathe for them, and dying, he left his children to Him who is the Father of the fatherless, who did not forget them ; and friends raised a sufficient sum for their education, while his brother took them to his own home.

Mr. Adair was a ripe Christian, and while cut down at a comparatively early period, came to the grave as a shock of corn fully ripe. He lived in constant and close communion with his God and Saviour. He was far too intent on spiritual and eternal realities to be affected by the events of a material world. All who knew him believed him to be a man of God. He was greatly mourned by his brethren in the mission field for the loss of his Christian society and prayers, and also by the Church and his people, who lamented the removal of a faithful minister and friend. He left behind him a good name. He has gone to his rest and reward. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.'

Mr. Adair was succeeded in the pastorate of Westport by one whose name and fame are a cherished memory of the Church, the Rev. Richard Smyth, but I cannot commence my story of him at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER XXII

IN the early part of the year 1855 we were favoured with a visit from one who subsequently became a well-known and famous character. Mr. Richard Smyth, a licentiate of the Route Presbytery, had been sent by the Board of Missions to supply the vacancy in Westport, and was ordained there in July of that year. As I propose only to deal with him in connection with 'My Life in Connaught,' I do not dwell on his previous history or his subsequent career as co-pastor of 1st Derry Congregation, Professor of Theology in Magee College, Doctor of Divinity, and Member of Parliament for county of Londonderry. Suffice it to say that he was born near Dervock, in the county of Antrim, and received his collegiate education first in the University of Glasgow for the undergraduate course, then studying in the Divinity classes for one year in Belfast, and for two years in the London Presbyterian College. It need hardly be stated that he distinguished himself in all the classes. He was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Route in November, 1853, and soon after received several calls from vacant congregations, among others from Hampstead, situated in a respectable suburb of London. But his health gave way, and he became so seriously ill that he was ordered off to Ireland for rest and relaxation. In these circumstances he, to the great regret of numerous friends and admirers, declined the call from Hampstead, though preparations had been made for his ordination. I cannot go into further particulars, but refer my readers to the *Presbyterian Churchman*, which contains in a series of papers a most interesting

memoir, commenced by his brother, Dr. Jackson Smyth, of Armagh, and continued after his lamented decease by a near relative, the Rev. J. J. M'Clure, of Duneane.

From this memoir it appears that some years before Mr. Smyth had any idea of coming to the West of Ireland, he had been deeply interested in its social and spiritual condition. He had been much affected by Dr. Edgar's pleadings for help to feed the hungry and starving, and also to make provision to supply them with the Bread of Life which came down from heaven. His honest indignation was aroused by the intelligence of the assault made on Dr. Dill, of which I have previously written. He wrote : ' This is an instance out of the hundreds which show the rancour that lurks in the heart of Antichrist. It seems that the design of the priesthood is to crush Christ and set up a man in his stead. May I have grace given me to await patiently the day when, by God's sovereign will, I shall hurl a shaft at these Popish champions, or with a sling in my hand send reeling to the ground the godless Goliath.' On his arrival in Connaught I was very soon brought into contact with him, owing to my position as Clerk of Presbytery, and ascertained that, like myself, he had no idea or intention of a settlement in Connaught. But besides this official connection, we speedily were drawn into a most intimate and cordial personal relation. A lifelong friendship was begun and maintained to the end without the shadow of interruption. His genial spirit, playful but harmless humour, along with his intellectual powers and ripe scholarship, rendered him a most agreeable companion, and the memory of those days is of the most pleasing nature.

On the occasion of his first sojourn in my manse he accompanied me to Mullaferry, Killala, where I was to preside at a meeting in the church in connection with a soirée and presentation to the Rev. John Wilson, who afterwards emigrated to Queensland. The presentation consisted of a purse of sovereigns and a cow. The purse was of course presented on the platform. The value and capabilities of the cow were fully and satisfactorily tested out-

side, where she was tied and duly milked to supply that needful addition to the tea. Mr. Smyth was greatly amused at the procedure, and affirmed that it far surpassed Hampstead or any other place where he had been present at a *soirée*. His speech at the meeting was characteristically excellent, and made a profound impression. For my part I urged on him the acceptance of the Westport call, as I felt he would revive our weak cause in that place, putting it also on the grounds of his own delicate health. I knew very well he would not be allowed to remain long there, but in the meantime I represented that his bodily energies would be so far restored by the fresh breezes of the Atlantic, and his mind freed from any great strain, so that he would be enabled ere long to occupy that prominent and responsible position for which he was so eminently qualified. He kindly yielded to my solicitations, and preparations were made for his settlement, which took place on June 28, 1855.

There was a numerous and respectable attendance, including the leading members of the Episcopalian and Methodist Churches, who evinced a deep interest in the proceedings. The services were conducted by the Rev. G. S. Keegan, who preached; the Rev. Thomas Armstrong, who explained and defended the leading principles of Presbyterian polity; the Rev. Robert Allen offered up the ordination prayer; the Rev. John Barnett gave the charge to the newly-ordained minister and congregation. At the close a handsome pulpit gown was presented by Mr. Allen on behalf of the ladies. Afterwards the members of the Presbytery were entertained at dinner by the congregation, and in the evening a *soirée* was held, when Mr. Smyth delivered an able and eloquent address. As might have been expected, the congregation, under Mr. Smyth's ministrations, increased in numbers and improved financially. On the first Sabbath he preached to sixteen in the morning and eight in the evening. Shortly after he could report that he seldom had less than ninety hearers, while the contributions for religious purposes went up from a little more than £20 per annum to upwards of £60. The

spiritual welfare of the people was also advanced. Besides the ordinary services on the Sabbath, he had weekly meetings in the remote districts for the benefit of the Scottish farmers and shepherds who were widely scattered from Connemara to Achill. Of this department of his work he reported in the *Quarterly Paper* of the following April that as a missionary he was 'assisted by three teachers. About *seven hundred* have passed through the schools since the mission commenced. We want only three things to make the work of the mission still more to prosper in our hands—more *help*, more *faith*, more *zeal*. We are not to relax our efforts because we cannot record conversions by the thousand. The leaven was "*hid*" in the meal, but it was leavening it for all that ; and our Gospel is "*hid*" to a great extent in the West of Ireland, but my humble conviction is that it is leavening quietly here, and will continue to do so till the whole lump is leavened.

'Scotch settlers have reaped great advantage from the mission. They belong to all branches of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland—Established, Free, and United Presbyterians. Some of them take a great interest in the work, and evince considerable liberality.'

The ministerial income was very small—a stipend of £20, with a manse ; the Regium Donum, or its equivalent, £70 ; and £30 from the Board of Missions. The manse was not then even as comfortable as it has been since made ; and, moreover, being located in a site which was both low and damp, it was not at all favourable to Mr. Smyth's health. But Providence opened up a suitable abode. The agent of the Bank of Ireland and his amiable and accomplished wife, both Episcopalians, became his warm admirers and fast friends. He accepted their pressing request to make their house his home. Under that hospitable roof he received every kind attention and comfort, which largely contributed to his restoration to a more robust state of body than he had long enjoyed.

Soon after the ordination, on my invitation he delivered a lecture in Ballina on 'The Crusades.' The house was crowded to excess by members of all the Protestant denomi-

nations, who evinced their delight by loud and rapturous applause. At their request I asked him to remain over the Sabbath and preach, which he consented to do. I occupied his pulpit. The services made a deep impression. It was arranged that I should remain in Westport till he joined me, which he did on the next day. We made an excursion to Connemara, which was my first visit to that romantic region. The wild beauties of Leenane and the Killeries, Joyce's country, Kylemoré and the Twelve Pins, and on to Clifden, furnished a delightful tour, all the more that they were quite novel and fresh to me, and especially with such a companion. I had also an opportunity of witnessing something of his missionary work, he published from time to time most interesting papers, which are now before me, concerning the Home Mission in its preservative and aggressive work, and also the Connaught Schools. I had proposed finishing this sketch of Mr. Smyth in the present chapter, but as I have sufficient materials I will occupy my next with them, which will, I feel assured, be as attractive as they are novel to my readers.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN the annual reports which, since my appointment as superintendent of the Connaught Schools and Orphanage, I have submitted to the general assembly, I have constantly referred to the double purpose of the Irish Mission. It is and has been a *preservative* and an *aggressive* agency. This was the view also taken by the Rev. Richard Smyth. To use his words : ' It stands upon two legs and holds out two hands—one protectingly over the scattered Presbyterian people, and another hand invitingly over the slaves of Rome. The mission, as an instrumentality of God in this land, proposes to itself two things—to keep the free-born free, and to *make* the slave-born free.'

In one of his papers he expresses his fear, as we still have reason to do, that the preservative or conservative aspect of the mission work is too little regarded and realized by our friends at a distance, and to ' stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance ' he gives some striking illustrations. He says, ' If we do not love the sea, it is something to prevent it from overwhelming us. And if the work of exhausting Rome progresses slowly, it is no despicable achievement to erect a barrier of evangelical religion to arrest its inroads, and with a humble reliance upon the strength and promises of God to say to it, " Hitherto hast thou come, but no farther." ' The conservative element in the mission is to the aggressive what the root of the tree is to the branches. In vain the branches spread unless the root has been securely fixed in the soil, and unless it has a strength commensurate with the extension of the branches. Now if our mission in the West is to be a

“spreading vine,” stretching out to our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, it must first of all root itself by keeping hold of the people that already belong to our communion.’ In proof of this view he narrates some facts that came under his observation, and which I now reproduce in the spirit, if not in the letter, of his own narrative.

Some years previously a young woman, Isabella F., whose father was an elder of the Established Church in the Highlands of Scotland, came over to this country, and was engaged as a servant in a respectable family. Having credentials from the kirk session of her native parish, she was received into the communion of the Church in Westport, and for some time attended regularly on the ministrations of the Rev. David Adair. She made the acquaintance of several Roman Catholics, who very soon devised plans to pervert her faith and ensnare her soul. Their progress was slow, but their arts were carried out with consummate craft, so as to produce no revulsion in her unsuspicious mind. When they considered the time had come for a more decided step, they introduced her to the nuns, who for a while studiously avoided all reference to religion. Whenever she could make it convenient to call the Convent was open to her at all times, and there she saw nothing but simplicity, gentleness, kindness, and devotion. Gradually the nuns began to administer a grain of error in an ounce of blandishments, and so on in successive doses, increasing in strength and quantity. She left her situation, and went to reside at the house of one of her Roman Catholic acquaintances, concealing her real motive from the minister, Mr. Smyth, and assigning plausible untruths as apologies for the step. At length the final step was taken. She was received into the Romish Church, and with trembling lips made her recantation, renouncing the hallowed faith of her fathers. Mr. Smyth made repeated attempts to see her, but in vain. After an interval of some weeks Mr. Smyth got a hint that she might be seen that evening in the house of a Protestant, and he hurried off with a sad heart, and had an interview with her. She burst into an agony of tears when they met,

and neither spoke for some minutes. His first word to her was, 'Isabella, is it true you have denied your Saviour?' Her feelings choked all utterance, but at length she replied with a most bitter emphasis, which seemed a prayer for pity, 'Oh, sir, *it is true.*' She then realized the depth of the gulf she had crossed, and was overwhelmed with horror. But the faithful pastor did not leave her so, and before parting felt that her convictions were on the side of truth, that she had been made the dupe of Romish flattery and craft, and that her heart was grieving under an agony of repentance. He repeated his visits, and ultimately she said she would make the most public reparation in her power for the scandal she had brought on true religion if he would only receive her into communion again, and get her away from a system she abhorred in heart. After several other interviews, being satisfied of her sincerity, a day was appointed for her public appearance in church to recant the errors of Romanism. After a solemn service she signed the following recantation, duly witnessed in the congregational book: 'I, Isabella F., do, in the presence of God and this congregation, renounce communion with the Church of Rome, believing it to be a church that denies Christ, and I do hereby express my deep sorrow and repentance for ever having had fellowship with that mystery of iniquity, whilst I pray that my guilt may be washed away in the blood of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

By the agency of the Presbyterian Mission this brand was plucked from the fire, a proof of how much that mission is needed, even to preserve the Bible-trained children of Scotland from the devices of Romanism in this dark land. Mr. Smyth adds the prayer: 'May Isabella F. be faithful unto death, and receive at last the crown of life.' I do not know her subsequent history, but I feel assured that the prayer of faith was answered by the covenant-keeping God.

In another paper, headed 'Vinedressers among the Mountains,' Mr. Smyth gave a graphic sketch of a day's work among the Scottish settlers in the wild Connemara hills. The scene was one of the monster farms of the West, covering the area of 150 square miles, over which were

scattered eight or ten Scotch shepherds, who, with three or four Irish herds in each district, formed the only inhabitants of this vast extent of mountain, glen, and moorland. It was part of his duty as home missionary to visit them, to spend days among them, to counsel them in their difficulties, comfort them in their troubles, baptize and catechize their children. He thus describes one visit to a family residing at the base of Mewlree, the 'King of the Mountains': 'It is a morning in November, raw and cold, with heavy mists rushing down from Croagh Patrick. Driving on a car for seventeen miles I reached the farthest point a civilized vehicle ever reached. A Connemara pony was in waiting to carry me four miles farther. Crossing rivers, on through marshes, and among rocks and climbing gorges, the faithful pony heads straight for Mewlree, when suddenly it sinks up to half the saddle girth in a slough. Dismounting, in half a minute the rider's legs are in the same predicament as the pony's, and the two struggle out together. At length the shepherd's house is reached. The other families from seven and eight miles distant have assembled, and a score of happy faces bid me welcome. Irish herds (Romanists) and their families gather in, and soon there is quite a congregation collected and seated in two apartments. One of the Psalms of David is sung, and some tears steal down weather-beaten cheeks as the Lord's song is sung in a strange land. Prayer is offered up, Scripture is read and expounded, and applied to the case of the earnest listeners, and when service is over you might see in the countenances of all a picture of blended solemnity and happiness. The congregation forms itself into a family, and partakes of such a repast as the hospitality of the mountain can supply. Scotland—its religion, its great and good men, its struggles for spiritual freedom, the necessity for personal godliness, the love of Christ, and the hopes of Christianity, are the subjects of conversation, and if all do not speak profoundly, they speak with feeling and intelligence. Some tracts and little books are distributed, and well are they read during the long nights of winter.

‘ It is far in the night when I get home, and if weary in body, refreshed in spirit, thankful to God that I have been able to bring tidings of grace and the comforts of the Gospel to the wild solitudes of the Connaught hills. Our friends in the North should know that their missionaries have sometimes to go through *the romance of hardships*, and that doing their duty they are far from being at ease in Zion. There is an absolute luxury in preaching the Gospel to the ignorant inhabitants of the Western wilds, upon whose ears it falls with all the charm of novelty, and upon their hearts, if God so pleased, with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Whilst our brother ministers in more pleasant places are gathering grape-clusters in the valleys, like that of Eshcol, we who, in a more barren land, are labouring for the Lord think it honour enough to act as “ vinedressers in the mountains.” ’

Writing of the Connaught Mission Schools he referred to the idea which some had formed that this agency had done its work, and should be superseded by some other instrumentality ; he said : ‘ I am not of that opinion. I have no hesitation in saying that to swamp the schools would be to open a vein in the arm of the missions. I am deeply impressed with the value of *female* teachers. They go to houses where I cannot go without bringing down priestly vengeance upon those who admitted *me* into the same cabin where pigs found a sanctuary ; but the female teacher was admitted without hindrance or remonstrance, and by gentleness and wisdom gained back her pupils, despite the smooth tongue of the nuns and the rough tongue of the priests.’

At a tea treat given by my predecessor, the Rev. R. Allen, in one of the schools, the children being examined answered with promptitude and confidence. All the children, with the exception of three, were Roman Catholics. There was one thought impressed on the minds of the visitors—namely, that all these children were persuaded that they *have a right to read the Bible*. ‘ This,’ Mr. Smyth writes, ‘ is the fact. Whatever their future course may be, whatever religious system they may adopt, it will be necessary

to convince them that such a religion is indicated in the Bible.' He narrates with great gratification an incident. Going one day into a cabin, he overheard a voice as of one reading, but could not distinguish the words, and naturally thought it might be 'The Key of Heaven' or some other Romish book. On entering he was delighted to find a little girl from one of our schools sitting on a sod by the fire reading a tract published by the London Religious Tract Society, and an aged woman sitting as a listener. He said to himself that this sight compensated for all the disappointments of his missionary life. 'But that is not a solitary instance of the school children becoming missionaries, and, all unconsciously to themselves, helping on the work of the Reformation. Cases like these cheer and comfort us, and it is not to be denied that we need comfort. Many such instances have come into my own experience. He accounts for the comparatively small number of the children who completely shake off Romanism by the home influences and social influences, and, above all, the priestly denunciations hurled upon the head of those who openly prefer the reformed faith, and which are too strong for their moral courage, and so they continue slaves, but do not kiss their chains. When removed to a land where Romanism is an alien they are free. 'Let us work on—praying, educating, and expecting. And when anyone is disposed to underrate the results of our school agency let this thought qualify any feelings of disappointment that might arise as they reflect on the history of Irish Missions. There is not a child leaves our schools but carries away this thought—a thought that haunts them to the very altar of the mass—"I have a right to read the Bible."' This regard for the mission schools he continued to cherish and practically manifest. Some years after his removal to Derry, when I called on him as a deputation from Mr. Allen, he so commended the work, that then and ever since the congregation and Sabbath School of First Derry have contributed liberally to this good cause. After a brief pastorate in Westport of barely two years, the Rev. Richard Smyth removed to Derry as the colleague of the

amiable and excellent Rev. William M'Clure, and was inducted on May 21, 1857. His departure was with the deep regret and yet the warmest good wishes of his people, and the Presbytery of Connaught, with whom he had always maintained the most pleasant relations.

Mr. Smyth was succeeded in the pastorate of Westport by Mr. John James Black. He was at the time under the charge of the Athlone Presbytery. The ordination took place on September 8, 1857. Along with him Mr. William John Taggart, who had been a licentiate of the Ballymena Presbytery, was ordained as missionary to the colonial field in Australia. The services of the day were conducted by the Rev. James Megaw, Clogher, who preached ; by the Rev. John Wilson, who explained and defended the leading principles of Presbyterianism ; by the Rev. Thomas Armstrong, who offered up the ordination prayer ; by the Rev. Matthew Kerr, who gave the charge to minister and people. There were present on the occasion the Rev. J. W. Whigham, brother-in-law of Mr. Black ; the Rev. John Meneely, of Ballymacarrett, and the Rev. Joseph Barklie, of Carnmoney. These two latter brethren were at the time, as deputation from the General Assembly, visiting the various congregations in the West.

CHAPTER XXIV

ANOTHER of the newly-formed congregations in the Presbytery of Connaught is Newport, or more strictly Newport-Pratt, and its first ordained minister was the Rev. George Shera Keegan. Newport is a small seaport town in the parish and barony of Burrishole, Co. Mayo. It stands on the Newport river about six miles from Westport, and nine from Castlebar, the county town, on the road to Achill and Belmullet. The site and surroundings of the town are beautiful and picturesque. The river flows merrily to the small estuary which opens into the expanse of Clew Bay, which is a perfect labyrinth of land and water, containing islands variously estimated at from 100 to 300 in number. The largest is Clare Island, at the entrance of the bay, and it largely contributes to the beauty of its scenery and safety of its navigation. Here was one of the castle residences of Granua Uaile. In a window of an old abbey her skull, as alleged, was preserved with great veneration. But one night, as the story goes, some Scottish speculator in bone manure swept away this skull with many other relics of frail mortality to be crushed in order to promote the growth of Aberdeen turnips. The views from the neighbourhood comprise also Croaghpatrick, the Burrishole Mountains, and the Nephin range. The town is of considerable antiquity, but was a poor and unimportant place until the second quarter of the present century. During the time of the famine the harbour was constructed, and the quays, which are excellent and extensive, accommodate vessels up to 400 tons burden. The population, which was 1,235 in

1831, has gradually diminished, as shown by each census return, and in 1861 numbered 861 persons. I cannot fix the exact figures at the present time. It is to be hoped that the new railway from Westport towards Mulraney and Achill, which passes through Newport, will largely contribute to a revival of its trade and to increased prosperity.

The maritime barony of Burrishole, in which Newport is situated, has as its prevailing physical character that of wild mountain and bare bog, yet it also contains a considerable extent of cultivated ground, chiefly reclaimed moor. The parish of Burrishole is of the same general kind—a high, rocky region, bare and bleak, but possessing great natural beauty in the environs of Newport and on the shores of the bay. The Newport Poor Law Union is a large one, comprising about 160,000 statute acres, but so many of them are waste that the Poor Law valuation is only some £12,000, and in 1851 the population was but 15,379 persons. In 1834 the parishioners of Burrishole consisted of 497 Episcopalians, 2 Presbyterians, and 12,135 Roman Catholics. At the same date in the barony the numbers at and above five years of age who could read and write were 4,530; who could read, but not write, 3,629; who could neither read nor write, 27,100. Here was a suitable field for educational and evangelistic effort.

The holders of land all belong still to the class of small farmers with the exception of a few Scotchmen, who in the bad times, encouraged by the proprietors to settle, took large farms at low rents and turned them to good account. Their holdings soon became recognisable by the large, well-fenced, well-drained, and clean-looking fields, the high cultivation of which evinced agricultural knowledge and skill, and furnished a good pattern and example to the small farmers surrounding them.

In 1851 this Scottish immigration into the neighbourhood commenced and continued to increase till in 1856 they numbered between seventy and eighty individuals from various parts of the kingdom, and belonging in about equal proportions to the Established, Free, and United

Presbyterian Churches. They were looked after by the Rev. David Adair, minister of Westport, who preached to them as frequently as he could, and was assisted in the summer of 1853 by Mr. Grant, then a theological student of the Free Church of Scotland. Mr. Grant left in the following October in order to resume his college course. His place was then immediately occupied by the Rev. George S. Keegan, who had for some time been engaged in mission work at Roundstone, Co. Galway, where he had succeeded the Rev. William Crotty, who at one time had been parish priest near Birr, in King's County, and who, with his cousin, the Rev. Michael Crotty, also a parish priest, had left the Church of Rome. One of them, Michael, connected himself with the Established Church, the other, William, becoming a Presbyterian. After ministering for a period in his native place Mr. Crotty was appointed a missionary in Connaught, labouring first in Roundstone and subsequently in Galway city, where after some years he died, greatly beloved and respected.

When Mr. Keegan arrived in Newport it was a mission station subsidiary to Westport, and its people were counted as in connection with that congregation ; but now it became a separate and distinct charge, though not for some years after was it regularly organized into a congregation. Mr. Keegan was ordained by the Presbytery of Connaught on Thursday, March 16, 1854. As the congregation was worshipping in the court-house, the use of which had been kindly given for preaching in, but was not available or suitable for an ordination service, this was conducted in Hollymount, when at the same time and place the Rev. James Love was ordained as the first pastor of that congregation, and Mr. Keegan as missionary minister for the Newport district. Those who conducted the services were the Rev. James Robinson who preached, the Rev. Thomas Armstrong explained and defended the leading principles of Presbyterianism, the Rev. John Barnett offered up the ordination prayer, and the charge was given by the Rev. Matthew Kerr. In Killala at the ordination of the Rev. John Wilson on the preceding Tuesday, March 14, the Rev. John Ashmore

preached, the Rev. Robert Allen gave the defence of Presbyterianism, the Rev. John Barnett offered up the ordination prayer, and the Rev. M. Kerr gave the charge.

That week in March, 1854, was memorable for three ordinations by the Connaught Presbytery. Besides the two now mentioned as ordained in Hollymount, the Rev. John Wilson, a near relative of the Rev. Dr. Edgar, was ordained on Tuesday the 14th, as missionary minister in Mullafarry, Killala, in the room of the Rev. Hamilton Magee, who had removed to Dublin to take charge of the mission work in that city. Mr. Love removed to Brisbane, in Queensland, in 1862, having been sent out under the auspices of the Colonial Mission. After some time he was received into the Episcopal Church, being of course re-ordained. He has since that time departed this life. Mr. Wilson also went to Queensland, having been appointed by the Board of Directors as a missionary to that colony. He, too, died there, but I cannot fix the date. Mr. Keegan departed this life on May 10, 1890, so that of these three who were then set apart to the work of the ministry there is no survivor; and of the members of Presbytery who took part in and were present at the solemn services three have fallen asleep—the Rev. Robert Allen, the Rev. M. Brannigan, and the Rev. James Robinson; six in all.

Soon after the ordination Mr. Keegan removed his Sabbath services from the court-house, and rented a school-room, to be used as a school during the week-days, and as a place of worship on the Sabbath. Mr. Allen encouraged him to do this and provided him with a teacher, and some time after with a second. He had also a catechist under his charge. With the view of relieving the mission funds, out of which Mr. Keegan had his entire support, I stimulated him and his people to have Newport organized into a regular congregation, and to qualify by the annual payment of £20 as stipend, according to the existing rules, for being endowed by the Government. This also was successfully accomplished. In August, 1856, a memorial was presented to the Presbytery from the Newport people seeking to be recognised as a distinct and separate charge, and to be

regularly organized into a congregation. This having been sanctioned by the Assembly, the erection was effected in the following year, and in due time the *Regium Donum* was obtained.

At first the erection of what was known as a school church, such as at Dromore West, was contemplated, but, being encouraged by the generosity of kind friends in Scotland as well as in Ireland, a more pretentious style of building was determined on. A suitable site was obtained in perpetuity at a nominal rent, with a plot of land allocated for the purpose of a graveyard. By the strenuous and indefatigable efforts of Mr. Keegan the requisite funds were obtained, and a handsome church was erected, and in June, 1857, it was formally opened for divine service by the Rev. John Macnaughtan, of Belfast. A debt, however, remained on the building, which was finally cleared off in 1864.

Some years ago a handsome manse was built on a fine situation, having five acres of land attached, at a fair rent. Mr. Keegan had occupied for years a most uncomfortable old house beset with vermin, so that it was designated by some, and correctly enough, a 'rat-hole.' But now, cheered with the prospect of having a new and suitable place of abode, he proceeded vigorously to collect the funds. In this arduous work he was generously responded to by the Presbyterians of Belfast and other places in Ulster. He also obtained considerable contributions in Scotland, chiefly in Glasgow. He was in sanguine expectation of having the entire debt on the manse cleared off, but his lamented illness and death prevented him from realizing his hopes, and there is still* remaining something above £100 to be liquidated.

* In 1891.

CHAPTER XXV

THE Rev. George Shera Keegan was a native of Ulster. He was born at a place known as the Scotch Corner, in the parish of Clontibret, Co. Monaghan, within about five miles from the town in which I was born, so that he and I were in early life near neighbours, though I had not the pleasure of making his acquaintance till his arrival in Newport. His parents belonged to the farming class, and were much esteemed and respected in the neighbourhood. They were consistent and earnest members of the Roman Catholic Church, in which faith our friend was carefully brought up. In early youth he came under the influence of the old Irish Schools, a number of which were in that neighbourhood in connection with the missions of the then Established Church, and he often told me that his conversion was largely owing to reading the Scriptures in the Irish language. He also became conversant with some devoted Catechists and Scripture readers of the same body. It was a time of considerable religious excitement. Controversial discussions were being carried on, of which, as I was then but a boy, I have but a dim and distant recollection, for it is now fully sixty years ago. There were several Roman Catholic laymen of rather humble position, yet acute reasoners and conversant with the subject, who spoke with great readiness and fluency. The only Protestant minister that took part in these discussions whose name I can recall, besides my own minister (the Rev. John Bleckley), was the Rev. Dr. Stewart, of Broughshane; but he was a tower of strength, and had on different occasions manifested marvellous powers in discussion and

debate. I have no doubt that young Mr. Keegan was acquainted with these discussions, as they were carried on in different parts of the country, and was influenced by them, as I have reason to know many of his co-religionists were.

A curious incident occurred with a cousin of his, which produced a deep and abiding impression, and largely contributed to his change of religion. This youth was desirous of becoming a priest. The first step to be taken to obtain admission to the College of Maynooth was, to be examined by the priest of the parish, who, if he approved of the candidate, recommended him to the Bishop, by whom he was nominated for entrance into the college. It appears that the father of this young man had at the time a quarrel of some sort with his Reverence, who rejected the candidate on examination, and refused to give the necessary recommendation to the Bishop. He returned home very much dejected and depressed. His father inquired on what subject had he failed—Classics, English, or Mathematics? 'On none of these,' was the reply, 'but on Scripture,' and the particular point was that he could not tell the name of Melchizedek's father. 'Never mind,' said the old man to the son, 'we will go to-morrow to the Bishop, and I will tell his lordship the name of Melchizedek's father.' Accordingly they went to the Bishop's residence, which was not many miles off, and, having obtained an audience, the old man told the story, and now said, 'I have come to answer the question my boy could not.' Pulling out of his pocket a package containing ten sovereigns, 'There,' said he, 'is Melchizedek's father,' and, producing a second package with similar contents, added, 'There is Melchizedek's mother,' requesting his lordship to accept the answer. His lordship did take it, and at once gave the wished-for nomination to the boy, who accordingly was admitted to Maynooth, where, however, he remained only a couple of years. On reflection, both father and son realized the injustice and venality of the transaction. After some time they both, with the whole family, became Protestants, and for prudential reasons emigrated to America. I give the story as I heard it from Mr. Keegan

both in public and in private. I once suspected that he himself was the individual in question, but he affirmed it was not so. The event, however, had its influence on his mind and heart.

After his open avowal of Protestantism Mr. Keegan was brought under the notice of some Scottish ladies and gentlemen who took a deep interest in the evangelization of Ireland, who advanced his education, and by their aid he was enabled to prosecute his collegiate studies, taking the undergraduate course in the University of Glasgow, and the theological classes in the New College, Edinburgh. He was then licensed to preach the Gospel by the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow. His chief friends were Lady Colquhoun, of Luss, whom he always designated his respected patroness, and also the Rev. Dr. Burns, of Kilsyth. During his college course he was employed for some time as a missionary among the navvies constructing the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway. In 1852 he came to the Rev. Robert Gault, formerly minister of Second Killyleagh, and who was then carrying on a mission among the Irish Roman Catholics of Glasgow, and for two years assisted him in that work. Mr. Gault says that 'he was most acceptable in the pulpit, on the platform, and in visitation. I have never met one more truthful, honourable, and conscientious in the discharge of his duties.'

Mr. Keegan's first appointment in Ireland was to Roundstone, in Co. Galway, to minister to some Scottish shepherds and farmers scattered through Connemara, and also to superintend Scripture readers and teachers in more direct evangelistic work. But his stay here was brief. Newport had very remarkably been the place, Lady Colquhoun had desired as the sphere of his labours; and now that in the providence of God the opening was presented, he gladly availed himself of the appointment of the Board of Missionary Directors to take up his abode there.

In writing to a friend on the occasion of his ordination he said: 'You will feel pleasure in knowing that on the 16th inst. I was ordained by the Presbytery of Connaught to the office of the holy ministry, as missionary of this

district. May I live very humbly in view of the new duties and responsibilities which are thus placed on me, and may grace be given for the faithful discharge of the same. I trust the blessing of Heaven will descend on my weak exertions for the regeneration of my fellow-countrymen. This is, as far as I can judge, the darkest district in the West. The inhabitants are in the most deplorable state of ignorance and superstition. If the Lord spares us we must make strenuous efforts to sow broadcast the good seed of the Word in this barren and ungenial soil, looking for the promised blessing to our Father in Heaven.'

His friends in Scotland did not forget him. He wrote : 'The dear friends in Glasgow, on my leaving, treated me in the kindest possible manner. A gorgeously-bound pictorial Bible and a gold watch and appendages were among the many tokens of regard and affection which I had the honour of receiving. The Lord gave me favour in the sight of men. Oh, for a heart to love Him, and lips to praise Him for ever and ever.'

After his ordination, when contemplating the erection of a school church, Miss Colquhoun, whom he called 'my present patroness,' sent him £10 to start the subscription-list, and some years after went out of her way to make a special visit to him. She described the newly-erected church, which, she said, was 'well constructed and neatly fitted up,' and particularly admired the round arched roof of carved dark wood, like mahogany, which had a chaste and pleasing effect. The Sabbath school teachers in connection with Mr. Gault's mission in Glasgow sent Mr. Keegan, 'as a beginning, a valuable box of books, tracts, and pamphlets for the use of the children in the Newport school.'

Having in a former chapter given a sketch of the origin and organization of the Newport congregation, I will not dwell on Mr. Keegan's operations as a minister and missionary. He continued for nearly thirty-seven years in the charge, not leaving it for any other place. His district was a very large one, extending to Achill, thirty miles from Newport. This he visited regularly, ministering to some Scotchmen who were stationed as coastguards, also members

of the constabulary from Ulster, and fishermen, an extensive curing establishment having been set up in Achill by a Free Churchman from Montrose. There were also Scotch shepherds in the mountainous region of Ballycroy, and various places in the wild parts of the barony of Burrishole. Owing to the great distances from the church, these could not, except very rarely, attend the public service of the sanctuary on the Sabbath ; but during the week they were visited in succession, and duly ministered to in their own homes, while the religious training of their children was looked after. In these long excursions, which in the winter time exposed him to much hardship, he travelled in his gig, drawn by a well-known horse named Samson, more noted for his strength than speed of foot.

Mr. Keegan's knowledge of the Irish language stood him in good stead. He occasionally preached in Irish, but more frequently turned it to account in colloquial intercourse with the people. His genial manners gave him many open doors. In several respects he resembled Mr. Brannigan, the other Irish-speaking member of the Connaught Presbytery. He was a sincere friend, with whom I had the pleasure of always being on the most amicable terms. An upright and honourable man, he was, moreover, a genuine Christian, loved and respected by all who knew him. He died full of hope and holy joy, and strong in faith, giving glory to God through his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Keegan's death took place on May 10, 1890. He had been ailing for some time, but no serious apprehensions of a fatal termination had been entertained by himself or friends. I regretted very much indeed that several causes prevented me from attending the funeral, and thereby testifying my respect for an old and valued friend.

It does not fall within my scope to refer to the present state and future prospects of the Newport congregation. My story is of the past, and I will not enter on contemporary history.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN the 'fifties' the state of matters in Connaught, as throughout the country generally, was comparatively quiet and uneventful. It was a period of political rest and freedom from agitation. The insurrectionary movement of 1848 had been crushed. The storm which had blown so boisterously about the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was hushed to a calm. Political movements and organizations one after another were baffled and beaten. The people seemed distrustful of their wonted leaders, and disgusted with the issue of deep-laid schemes. Agitation was apparently dead at the root, and no special war cry was raised. Many hoped that the people would settle down into orderly habits of industry and peace, while 'sullen indifference and moody despair others judged it to be.' It was, however, but a slumbering volcano which in the after years burst forth in fury. Meanwhile, once and again indications were given which showed that there were underlying elements which only needed opportunity to develop themselves into mischief and trouble. One illustration I will give. In 1852 a contested election took place in Co. Mayo. One of the candidates was a tried and trusted leader of the Nationalist party, both able and eloquent. He was opposed by a country gentleman, and, strange to say, with fair prospects of success. The registry of voters had been considerably depleted during the famine years, especially of the lower class, so that, taking into account the territorial influence, it was not unreasonably expected there would be a reversal of the usual majority. This, however, was not the case as the result of the election

showed. But I do not enter into the forbidden field of politics. The struggle was very bitter, and for weeks the county at large, and Ballina in particular, were the scenes of fierce terrorism and intimidation. Non-voters, myself among the rest, and the Rev. R. Allen, that singularly gentle and inoffensive man, were insulted and abused. The town was at the mercy of the mob, and but for the very large force of constabulary gathered in from the out-stations, matters would have been very bad. Even these were unable to cope with the difficulty, when the arrival of a detachment of military acted as a sedative, and imparted confidence. We had all much reason to complain of the apathy, or worse, of the R.M., who was evidently an extreme partisan and acted accordingly. I had a narrow escape myself, although I took no part whatever in the election proceedings. I was standing in conversation with a gentleman, a native of Ballina, who had resided several years in America, but had returned to the place of his birth. He had rendered himself obnoxious to the mob, because on the previous day he had stood by the constabulary at a time when they were assailed. While talking to him we were suddenly confronted by a crowd with weapons and missiles which they seemed about to use. I do not think I was particularly singled out for attack, but I was in great danger. However, I said to my friend, 'Doctor, let us face them, for if we turn our backs we are sure to be seriously imperilled.' 'Oh,' said he, drawing out a revolver, 'Boys, I have a five-shooter, and I will have as many lives before I go down. Come on.' They instantly decamped. A memorial was afterwards presented to the Government, calling for an inquiry into the conduct of the Resident Magistrate, which was granted. Along with others I was examined, and after a lengthened investigation he was suspended for six months for neglect of duty. The priests had been very active and successful, and used their weapons, spiritual and carnal, with remarkable vigour. Late events prove that their right hand has not altogether lost its cunning, though they cannot use it with the freedom and force they were accustomed to some

forty years ago. At this time the Roman Catholic clergy were very active and aggressive in other spheres. Alarmed at the progress made by the Irish Church Missionary Society and by our own Church in various places, vigorous efforts were made to counteract the work that was going on. One form these assumed was the destruction of copies of the Holy Scriptures, more or less publicly and ostentatiously. At Ballinrobe, in South Mayo, a monk had burned some Bibles on the street in open day. For this he was tried before the Judge of Assize, for such acts were, it appeared, an offence to Common Law, and, I suppose, are so still. He was convicted by a jury composed of both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Having expressed regret for what he had done he was, after an admonition by the Judge, released on his own recognizances to keep the peace. Another transaction of a similar nature occurred at Bealderig, situated some miles west of Ballycastle. A priest entered the house of an Irish teacher, and taking down from a shelf five copies of the sacred Scriptures, an English Bible and a Testament, and three Irish Testaments, committed them to the flames till they were burned to ashes. Informations were sworn by the teacher's son before a magistrate, and the case came on in due course before the bench at the Petty Sessions at Ballycastle. In the interval the boy had disappeared, having been tampered with. But he was produced on the day of trial, and then swore that his former statements were false. The case was dismissed, the court ruling that the informations were not sustained by evidence. Application was then made that informations should be taken against the boy for perjury. This the magistrates agreed to. Informations were then sworn by the Clerk of the Sessions. Ultimately, however, the matter was allowed to drop. Considerable interest was taken in the event. The clergy on both sides attended in large numbers. There was some excitement, but no disturbance. It is very unpleasant, and even painful, to recall and record such scenes, but it is a duty sometimes to do so, as it is desirable that friends should know something of the troubles and difficulties which had

to be encountered in the early history of the Connaught Mission. Many similar events I could mention, but enough have been given as a specimen, and I need say no more on the subject.

In the autumn of 1854, I took part in the ordination of the Rev. Andrew Brown in Turlough, which is situated about four miles from Castlebar, the county town of Mayo. I had made the acquaintance of the preceding minister, the Rev. John Hamilton. He had preached at my ordination in Ballina, and I had visited him on different occasions, making myself fairly acquainted with the place and people. The scattered but pleasantly-situated village of Turlough lies on the road from Castlebar to Swineford, adjoining the beautiful demesne of the Fitzgerald family. Besides the ordinary ecclesiastical and public buildings there is one of the old Round Towers, which is in complete preservation, has a conical cap, and appears to the eye remarkably tall and beautiful. The Presbyterian congregation owes its origin to a colony of settlers, chiefly from Cos. Down and Donegal, who were encouraged to come by the then representative of the Fitzgerald family in the latter half of last century. The colonists consisted of Presbyterians and Episcopalians, and as they did not feel themselves in a position to maintain two separate churches the matter was referred to Colonel Fitzgerald. His opinion was that one minister would suffice, that a vote should be taken as to what Church he should belong to, and the majority was for a Presbyterian. The proportions subsequently altered very considerably, for in 1834 the census returns gave for the parish of Turlough, 662 Episcopalians, 201 Presbyterians and 6,595 Roman Catholics.

The new congregation gave a call to the Rev. Henry Henry, who, however, declined it, and removed to Garvagh, and subsequently to Connor. During his residence at Turlough the celebrated or notorious George Robert Fitzgerald met an untimely end on the gallows. This gentleman was a patron of the Presbyterians, but his moral character was bad. A gambler, duellist, and characterized by all the vices of the period, he acted in a way that charity

would fain ascribe to insanity. He was hanged in Castlebar and was attended to the scaffold by Mr. Henry. The ministers of Turlough were the Rev. A. Marshall, who resigned in 1795 on his removal to Killala. He was succeeded by Rev. Mr. Hall, who continued till his death in 1824, when the Rev. John Hamilton was ordained. As he died in 1854, on May 1, I had the pleasure of his acquaintance after my arrival in Connaught in 1845.

Mr. Hamilton had been in delicate health for some years, and latterly the Sabbath services were conducted by Mr. Andrew Brown, who had been appointed by the Board of Directors as missionary in Castlebar and neighbourhood. His ordination took place on September 20, 1854. The Rev. John Wilson preached, the Rev. John Ashmore explained and defended the leading principles of Presbyterianism, the Rev. John Dewart offered up the ordination prayer, the Rev. James Robinson gave the charge, and the Rev. M. Kerr concluded with devotional exercises. The members of the congregation had been considerably reduced by emigration and other causes. From the annual return it appeared that there were sixteen families, comprising eighty individuals. On our return from the meeting an accident occurred which had nearly proved fatal to myself. The brethren occupied two outside cars. The driver of the one in which I was fell asleep, the horse took fright at a heap of stones, and plunged into a gully some ten feet deep. I was thrown down, and the car fell within a foot of my head. Providentially there were no bones broken, and I escaped with some severe bruises, causing considerable pain and trouble for weeks afterwards.

The Rev. Mr. Hamilton had held for several years the appointment of Presbyterian Chaplain to the county prison at a salary of £30 per annum. In the interval between his death and Mr. Brown's settlement the Board of Superintendence appointed a Methodist preacher to the vacancy. This being considered prejudicial to the interests of the Church at large, and to those of the minister of Turlough, the Presbytery resolved to take the necessary steps for the vindication of our rights. In accordance with this I

attended the next assizes, and employed counsel, as the Methodists had done the same, to plead our cause before the Judge. He ruled that Methodist preachers were eligible under the Prisons Act, so the appointment continued until the removal of the preacher at the end of his three years' service in Castlebar. The Grand Jury took advantage of the fresh vacancy and discontinued the chaplaincy, and thus both parties were ousted.

The action of our Methodist friends in seeking to secure a chaplaincy was unprecedented, and, as it turned out, exceptional. It led to some alienation and unpleasantness, which, happily, have long since passed away. Counsel had advised an appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench in vindication of the customary rights of the Presbyterian Church, but the Committee of the General Business of the Assembly thought it better not to do so, rightly believing that a similar case would not again occur.

It should have been mentioned that Mr. Brown had been appointed by the Board of Directors as a missionary to the Jews, which appointment, however, he had declined on receiving and accepting the call to Turlough congregation.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE year 1854 is memorable in 'My Life' and in the history of the Connaught Mission as being the time when the 'Ballina Orphanage and Refuge Home' was erected. Ever since the Rev. Robert Allen had been appointed superintendent of the schools he had felt the need of such an institution. Numbers of children had been left orphans in the famine years, and others required a protecting shelter from evil and dangerous influences. For a time a house had been rented for the purpose, but it was neither suitable nor sufficient. Telling the story to an Irish gentleman resident in Manchester, the late John Stuart, Esq., he was authorized to build an orphanage and refuge home if a suitable site could be secured. Fortunately at the time such was available. When the church, school, and manse were erected, a plot of the ground was left unoccupied. I had endeavoured to arrange with the owner to take it off our hands for a reasonable sum, so that we might be relieved of a portion of the rent, £10 per annum, which, in our circumstances, was felt to be burdensome. Arrears, too, had accumulated to the amount of £40, which the Board of Missions did pay, but intimated that for the future we must meet this liability ourselves. When I brought the matter before the Congregational Committee and Trustees they did not see their way to alienate any of the Church property, and when I pleaded our inability to pay they undertook to raise the money without any effort on my part. At this stage Mr. Allen proposed to take the plot at an annual rent of £5 and erect an orphanage. This offer was accepted, and in due

course the house was built. For several years it was left incomplete, the upper storey being unfinished till my appointment, when I obtained from Mr. Stuart sufficient funds to put the house in order. Subsequently, in 1886 the building was considerably enlarged and improved, and office-houses put up. The cost quite equalled that of the original structure, but happily, by the kind liberality of my friends, the entire amount has been paid, and no debt remains.

Such is a brief account of the Ballina Orphanage and Refuge Home. During Mr. Allen's lifetime it was occupied exclusively by girls, but one circumstance after another led me to include boys, the additional accommodation enabling me to do so. The leadings of Providence were very marked and manifest in the inception of the institution, as indeed, throughout its entire history, the many hundreds who have been preserved and protected, and their future provided for, as well as the spiritual blessings so abundantly realized, furnish great cause of gratitude to the Father of the fatherless, and cause us to cherish a loving memory of the men who founded and fostered the Ballina Orphanage and Refuge Home.'

In a former chapter I mentioned that on the occasion of the ordination of Rev. John Barnett in Clogher an address was given by the Rev. James Glasgow, missionary in India, then on furlough. He advocated the cause of the Foreign Mission so well that the Connaught Presbytery resolved to undertake the support of one missionary school in connection with the Assembly's Mission in India. I was appointed secretary and treasurer, and subsequently the Rev. M. Kerr was appointed. For several years this arrangement was carried out, until some of the brethren having become dissatisfied with the want of information as to the school in Katiawar, it was agreed that in future those members of Presbytery who should feel disposed to continue their contributions to this object should do so in their individual capacity.

Colportage in Connaught was another work which the Presbytery took up. Mr. Barnett led the way in this, and

was appointed secretary and treasurer to the Committee of Management. At the end of two years the Board of Directors agreed to support one colporteur, and the man who had been labouring in the Boyle district was appointed, and after some time a second agent was selected for Ballina and Killala district. In the course of a few years others were employed, to the number of seven, besides whom there were five who acted as Scripture readers, but did not sell books. The journals of all these were examined quarterly by the Presbytery, and an effective supervision of the men and their work maintained. This mode of management, along with annual examinations, was found to be very useful, as bringing the lay agents into touch with the ministers, and affording opportunity for instruction and advice, as well as control.

By the joint invitation of Mr. Allen and myself the Rev. William Crotty delivered in the close of 1850 a series of lectures on the 'Reformation and the distinctive doctrines of Protestantism.' He had been originally a Roman Catholic clergyman in Birr and Parsonstown, King's County, but at the time of which I write he was a minister of the Presbyterian Church and resident in Galway, where he acted as missionary. His previous history had been sufficiently known in Ballina, and in consequence his visit attracted considerable attention, and his lectures were attended by large audiences of all denominations. His addresses were pointed and pungent, but in no instance of a personal character, and not calculated to cause irritation or offence on the part of his former co-religionists. The interest was sustained till the close of the series. On the last night the weather was very wet and tempestuous, so much so that we apprehended a great falling off in the attendance, and advised Mr. Crotty to abandon or postpone his address; but he would not, and to our great surprise the audience was as large and as enthusiastic as on previous occasions. There was no disturbance or opposition of any kind, and all passed off without, apparently, any bad or bitter feeling being evoked.

During his sojourn I had frequent interesting conversa-

tions with him, and he left on me a most favourable impression as a scholar, a gentleman, and a Christian. He gave many details of himself in his early history, of the change in his religious views, and of the inner life of the Roman Catholic clergy, which I do not propose to repeat, as I am not going to write his biography, but merely recall a few facts which I learned from himself and from other authentic sources.

Mr. William Crotty was a native of King's County, near to Birr. He was early intended for the priesthood, and received the most of his education on the Continent, partly in Paris, and also in Angoulême in the South of France. Among other incidents in this part of his career he told me of one illustrative of himself, and of the French people, who were largely imbued with infidel sentiments and intense dislike of the clergy. He and his college companions in Angoulême were often annoyed and insulted. They were called 'ravens' from their long dark dress, and the cries of 'Croak, croak' were uttered as they walked along. These annoyances became at last too much for the young Irishman, and one day he rushed at a man who had made himself especially offensive, and forced him under dread of bodily chastisement to apologize, and promise better behaviour for the future. It would seem that even at this early period—it was in the year 1825—that he had begun to entertain religious doubts, yet expected ordination in France, when he was summoned by the Bishop of Killaloe to return home. He was greatly annoyed at this, especially as no reason had been given. Yet, yielding obedience to ecclesiastical authority, he returned, and was then informed that it was owing to the conduct of his cousin, the Rev. Michael Crotty, who was then in a state of hostility with his Bishop. Michael was curate in Birr, and had inflicted personal chastisement on a man for apparent misconduct; but he, being a Protestant, instituted legal proceedings resulting in a fine, but Mr. Crotty being very popular with the parishioners, they raised a collection to defray the law expenses, which was very distasteful to the Bishop, who suspended him. The people revolted

against this, and offered to maintain Mr. Crotty, and expected to retain possession of the chapel, from which, at the Bishop's request, they were ejected by Lord Rosse, with the aid of the military. William did not succeed in reconciling the contending parties, and soon the cousins came to united action. In the meantime William had been ordained.

For some time they merely disputed points of discipline and order, but with slow and cautious steps they proceeded to call in question some of the leading doctrines of the Church, and began to preach Christ, at first imperfectly, but gradually adopted and contended for justification by faith only in the Saviour and other leading doctrines of the Gospel. Having been suspended by the Bishop, they were unable to obtain the holy oil required for one of their sacraments. This caused them to examine the Scriptures as to the orders of bishops and presbyters, and they came to the conclusion that they were identical, and so they consecrated the oil themselves. After a while this rite was discontinued, the Mass was given up, the Gospel preached, public worship and the sacraments administered according to the simple and Scriptural forms of our Church. Through the guidance and advice of the Rev. Joseph Fisher, of Galway, they then sought admission into the Synod of Ulster through the Presbytery of Dublin. After due examination and inquiry Mr. William Crotty was admitted into our communion. He was accompanied in this step by a large portion of his congregation, to the number of 150. On May 30, 1839, the Dublin Presbytery met in Birr, and received Mr. Crotty as a minister by a service similar to our installation. The Rev. John Dill, of Clonmel, preached, the Rev. W. B. Kirkpatrick expounded the distinctive principles of Presbyterianism, the Rev. Joseph Fisher put the usual questions, and the Rev. Dr. Carlisle gave the change to minister and people. About 500 persons were present. Thus, after a lapse of thirteen years, was Mr. Crotty with this body of his people formally received as a minister and congregation of the Presbyterian Church. For several years Mr. Crotty continued to officiate in Birr. He then

was removed by the Board of Missions to Connaught, first in Roundstone as missionary and superintending Scripture-readers and schools, and afterwards in the town of Galway until his death in 1856.

The September number of the *Missionary Herald* of that year contains a very pleasing obituary notice, which I may afterwards reproduce.

As to his cousin Michael, the people had become dissatisfied with his procedure and doings. He also applied for admission into the Presbyterian Church, but the Presbytery of Dublin did not see their way to receive him, although the Rev. Dr. Cooke, of Belfast, offered to guarantee an annual income of £100. He ultimately joined the Episcopal Church. Of his subsequent career I know comparatively little.

While he remained in Birr, I should have said, that Mr. William Crotty was supported mainly by the congregations of Mary's Abbey and Usher's Quay, Dublin.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE Rev. James (afterwards Dr.) Carlile took a deep interest in what was called the Birr Reformation.

For a length of time he had been greatly concerned about the evangelization of Ireland, and had written a small book giving his ideas as to the mode in which a mission to the Roman Catholics should be conducted. The events at Birr seemed to him a providential opening for carrying out his plan into practical operation. Having visited the place, he was appointed by the Presbytery, at the request of Mr. Crotty, to assist him for three months, and afterwards, with the concurrence of Mary's Abbey congregation, he removed to Birr with his family, taking up his residence there permanently, though still continuing to be minister of Mary's Abbey, which was a collegiate charge. The arrangement of the Presbytery was that Mr. Crotty was to be the sole recognised pastor of the congregation, and Dr. Carlile the sole agent for superintending the missionary operations, but recommending both to co-operate in a friendly spirit with one another. For a time matters went on comfortably and satisfactorily, till differences arose which it is unnecessary to enter into. A dual administration was unworkable. They were both excellent men, but of a different type and style, so that it was found desirable to make an entire separation, and the General Assembly in 1841 removed Mr. Crotty and his congregation from the Dublin Presbytery to the Presbytery of Athlone. Dr. Carlile continued to labour in Birr for the remainder of his life. He employed Scripture-readers to visit all who would receive them, organized schools, published vigorous

tracts, and used energetically all the means he could employ in his missionary operations. He did a great and good work till his death in 1854 at the age of seventy.

It does not fall into my scope to enter into details of Dr. Carlile's life and work, as he was not directly connected with Connaught. Suffice it to say, he was a remarkable man in natural talents and ability. He bulked out largely in the Church and General Assembly, although he took little part in debates. As an author he was original and profound. He also prepared several books for the use of the schools in connection with the National Board of Education, of which he was one of the earliest commissioners. Occupying a very prominent position in Dublin, where he was associated with statesmen and leading men of the day, he retired to a small country town to carry on the Lord's work in the direction of a few Scripture-readers and schools. This speaks volumes for his self-denying devotion to what he considered the cause of Christian patriotism. He was one of the old worthies, now all gone, with whom I had the honour and privilege of being acquainted.

Mr. William Crotty was transferred by the Board of Missions to Roundstone, in the district of Connemara. This is a village in Co. Galway, and was built by Mr. Alexander Nimmo about the year 1826. This gentleman was a celebrated civil engineer, and he largely contributed to the opening up of the remote parts of the county by the construction of roads. Mr. Nimmo was a Scotch Presbyterian, and there were several others of the same faith in the district. In 1839 the Rev. Joseph Fisher had called the attention of the Dublin Presbytery and Home Mission to the case, and in due time a small church was erected, where occasionally Divine service was conducted and was well attended. After some years the fishing and other industries failed, and Roundstone rapidly went down, and is now an almost deserted and desolate village. In the year 1883 I visited Connemara in company with the Rev. S. G. Crawford, minister of Westport. The church had been little used for years, and was in much need of repairs. The

graves in the adjoining burying-ground of Mr. Nimmo and his brothers were in a sad state. On representing the matter to the Board of Missions a grant of money was given to put the church and grounds in good order.

It was to this remote and romantic, but very wild region that Mr. Crotty was first sent after leaving Birr. He describes its religious condition thus : ' This is one of the dark corners of the land ; here Romanism is dominant and rampant ; here the monster roars without reply, and ravages without resistance.' In the prosecution of his work he encountered much trouble, but was able after a time to write, ' A great change has been wrought in the minds of the population. Instead of being actuated by feelings of enmity and hostility against us, as they seemed to have been when we first came here ; they now manifest the kindest feeling to us, and treat us with the utmost civility and courtesy.' Yet he had many difficulties to encounter and vexatious annoyances of various kinds, and was, no doubt, pleased to be transferred to the town of Galway. Before removing he reports that the schools are succeeding beyond expectation. ' I attend five preaching stations besides Roundstone—namely, Clifden, Ballinakill, Orrismore, Recess, and the Isle of Arran. At all these places there is a pretty good attendance considering the small number of Protestants residing in each locality.'

Before Mr. Crotty's arrival in Galway his friend, the Rev. Joseph Fisher, who had early taken an interest in him, and largely helped him in his struggles out of Rome and his progress to Presbyterianism, had left for London in the year 1845. He was succeeded by the Rev. William Adair, who cordially co-operated with Mr. Crotty, but each had his own proper sphere, the former as pastor of the congregation, the latter as missionary over the county. He had charge of Connemara as well, where he had nine mission stations scattered over a district of country extending sixty Irish miles in length. He was most indefatigable in the discharge of his duties, and by preaching, lecturing, and publishing tracts and papers did his utmost to advance the cause he had so much at heart. He had a difficult, if

not dangerous, post to occupy, and on several occasions, both in Galway town and elsewhere, was violently assailed. He wrote several letters in the *Missionary Herald* describing his work and trials. In October, 1853, occurs this passage : ' I have been often insulted and hooted. My dwelling-house was broken at the dead of night by large stones thrown at the doors and windows. The meeting-house was often broken, even when we were assembled at prayer. My agents and hearers were beaten and insulted in the public streets, and I was often drummed to and from the meeting-house by a ferocious mob, shouting and yelling. On one occasion I was near losing my life. It was in the town of Athenry, where I was stoned after nightfall in the public streets. I received on that occasion a blow from a large stone on the shoulder, by which I was staggered, and had I fallen my blood would have been shed. The perpetrators of this outrage I summoned, convicted, and forgave.' Again, ' Well, I have forborne all this and a great deal more, and what is the consequence ? Why, many of those who were a short time ago my determined enemies are now become my friends. I will just mention one case to prove this. I was accosted on the wooden bridge in Galway by a man whom I well knew, and who was a ringleader of the mob in annoying and insulting me and my hearers. He said, " Sir, I have often insulted you and your people, and I have not had a day's luck since, for I have lost my trade, and am almost reduced to beggary ; but you bore it all like a gentleman. I hope you will forgive me." I said I was glad he saw his error, and that I forgave him, but he said, " Now, sir, I won't be easy in my mind unless you put a hand to your heart and forgive me." I accordingly did as he desired, and I have found him, ever since, very sober and steady, and attentive to his business.'

Mr. Crotty had the sympathy and confidence of his brethren. The Presbytery of Athlone, of which he was a member, passed a resolution conveying to him an expression of their sympathy in the trying circumstances in which he was placed. In reply he said, " I have reason to thank the Presbytery for their great kindness towards

me, and although I do not deserve such a high testimony to my faithfulness, I hope it will be a means of stimulating me to further exertion in my Master's service.'

Having made inquiry from friends in Galway I find that there are at this lapse of time hardly any who could give me definite information. One gentleman writes thus: 'When I came to Galway the Rev. William Crotty was labouring here as a missionary. I do not know that he ever preached in the church on the Sabbath, but he often preached controversial sermons in it on the Wednesday evenings. On one occasion he had to be taken out of the church by a window and conveyed round to the manse until the police could disperse the mob, which usually gathered and hooted and howled during the continuance of the service. On another occasion when he was preaching a large stone was thrown through the window. Had it struck anyone it surely would have killed the person. He mixed among the people, and chatted with them on religious subjects. I do not know the year when he died, but I remember one summer day he came into our house, as he frequently did, and sat down on the sofa. He slept for a short time, and when he awoke he apologized, and said he had just come in from bathing, and that he took a great headache and shivering out of the water. He thought he would go home as he was better now. When he got to his house he went to bed, the shivering developed into fever, and he never rose again. My wife was a constant visitor, and was the last person that saw him alive.'

Mr. Crotty at his death left a widow and ten children. He had married respectably in Birr just before he had been received into the Presbyterian Church. The wife of my informant suggested that a subscription should be commenced for the purpose of presenting a suitable testimonial of respect for his worth and work. In conjunction with the Rev. Mr. Adair an appeal was drawn up and published. In the course of a few weeks £1,000 was subscribed by persons of all religious denominations, Roman Catholics among the rest. This was a valuable testimony to his Christian character and consistency.

I am unable to give the exact date of his death, but it must have been in the summer of 1856, as in the September number of the *Missionary Herald* of that year occurs the following : ' It has not been our custom to make the *Herald* the vehicle of obituary notices, but our readers will agree with us that the death of Mr. Crotty should be regarded as an exceptional case. Connected with the Roman Catholic mission of the Presbyterian Church for many years—intimately associated with him in his work—possessing his confidence—we can say, and justice to his memory requires us to say, that he was a man of unswerving integrity in all the transactions of life, and of sincere and devoted attachment to the principles of the Protestant Reformation. From the day he came out of the Church in which he was educated, and in which he officiated as a priest, he never looked back or betrayed any hankering to return. Here he being dead yet speaketh, and we do most confidently believe the statement taken from his journal, the last received from him, that he would not for a million of money again enter the communion of Rome. A bold controversialist, he was withal a wise and skilled one, for while he fearlessly stated truth and exposed error, he did so in a spirit of such kindness as not only to give no offence but to inspire respect. His lectures, many of which have been given to the public through the press, might with advantage be republished. He was, too, a man of generous spirit, liberal up to his means in relieving the wants of a pauperized population among whom he constantly lived. Had he been a richer man than he was we still believe he would have died poor. An appeal, sanctioned by the Board of Missions, has been addressed to all the ministers of the Assembly. We cannot doubt its success, for we could not well conceive a claim on their Christian sympathies or generous efforts stronger than the present.'

My informant in Galway narrates an incident occurring some time later, but which I may as well mention here, regarding the Rev. Henry M'Manus, who was a college acquaintance of mine, but several years older. 'The famous Father Gavazzi had been holding meet-

ings in Dublin, and was invited by the Rev. Mr. Brownrigg, of the Irish Church Mission, to lecture in Galway. During the proceedings stones rattled over the slates thrown by a large, infuriated mob. When the meeting broke up the Rev. H. M'Manus, a retired Presbyterian minister, who had done duty in Connemara, and formed one of the audience, was followed by the mob who battered him with mud and stones, and a butcher came with a cleaver to split his head. When I saw him he had lost his hat, his gray hairs were streaming behind him with the wind, and his coat all torn. He went to several open doors asking shelter, but was thrust back to the will of the mob. At length Mrs. Thomson, who was well known and respected in Galway, ran out and called Mr. M'Manus to come into her house, which he did, and the mob soon after withdrew. No lasting injury resulted from the treatment. Mr. M'Manus's health was delicate for some time previous to the above painful incident, but he lived several years after. He died of consumption and exhaustion at his residence, Clontarf Road, near Dublin, October, 14, 1864.

CHAPTER XXIX

PREVIOUS to the year 1856 Ballina was not under any municipal authority or control. There was the Board of Guardians of the poor, and Harbour Commissioners, but though having a population of nearly 5,000, with large trade and a considerable amount of steamers and other shipping frequenting the port, there was no public body appointed to look after the lighting and cleansing or water-supply. Hence matters in these respects were in a bad way. The streets were very filthy. Occasionally an effort would be made to cleanse the leading thoroughfares, but the other streets and lanes were very much let alone. The darkness was on a par with the dirt. Even the old-fashioned oil-lamps used in other towns were unknown. It was the custom for each household to have one or more candle-lanterns to be carried about when going to or returning from their places of worship or visiting friends and neighbours. The river flowing through the town afforded an abundant supply of water, such as it was, but being polluted by the influx of sewage it was not fitted for drinking or culinary purposes, so that the town was dependent on some spring wells, not many in number, for their supply. These wells were frequently dried up in summer when they were most needed. There had been a growing feeling of dissatisfaction with this discreditable condition of things, and a desire to have it remedied. But owing to the divided state of parties, both in religion and politics, and the want of an influential leader possessing the general confidence of the community, there seemed little hope of improvement. At this juncture it was dis-

covered that there was a unity of sentiment among the clergy and leading members of all denominations. Seeing this, and apprehensive lest the opportunity might pass away, I urged the propriety of adopting immediate and decisive measures for placing the town under commissioners. This was done. A large meeting of the ratepayers was held in the court-house, and the proceedings were rather exciting and stormy. A formidable opposition to the proposal had been organized, at the head of which were the principal owners of house property, who disliked the additional financial burden they would have to bear, and they exercised considerable influence. There were others who were quite content with the existing order of things, and not feeling the need or appreciating the benefits of light and cleanliness, wished for no change. The proverbial impatience of taxation also had its effect. The advocates of progress and improvement mustered in full force. A respectable Roman Catholic merchant moved the adoption of the Act, and I was put forward to second it, which I did in a speech lasting upwards of an hour. Though not intending it, as I desired to conciliate adverse parties, I must have said some hard things reflecting on the indifference of the proprietors to the comforts of their tenants and the interests of the town, for some of them did not speak to me for years, but ultimately renewed the friendly terms which had previously existed. When the polling day came it was found that our opponents had been dispirited by the proceedings of the public meeting, and our proposal was carried by a sweeping majority. The Town Commissioners were duly elected, and cleansing operations commenced and carried on. Gasworks were erected by a Scotch company who had secured the contract, the opening of which was celebrated by a public dinner, when the gentry manifested their good feeling and taste in attending, one of them in the chair, and so the hatchet of war was apparently buried.

Several years elapsed before the third part of the Act, that of the water supply, was carried out. Great and at one time insurmountable obstacles had been in the way. These have been overcome, and now Ballina is abundantly

supplied with water brought from a lake some four miles distant, and distributed by pipes throughout all quarters of the town.

Looking back at the events of thirty-six years ago, in which I took such a prominent part, I have no reason to regret the course I adopted. Some may think I was rather out of place as a minister of the Gospel, but in the peculiar circumstances of the case I consider I was fully justified. My people cordially supported me, and I had the hearty sympathy of my venerable friend the Rev. Robert Allen, a man noted for his sagacity and prudence. The inhabitants generally were frequent in their expressions of good-will. Indeed, a general feeling of friendliness and co-operation for the common good seemed to pervade public mind. It was and still is a source of satisfaction to myself that I in some degree contributed to this pleasant result. Though things have altered since in some respects, I am thankful that I was enabled to take a part in ameliorating the condition of my humble neighbours, and in advancing the social interests of the town of my adoption.

The province of Connaught, and, in fact, the whole of the Western counties bordering on the ocean, from Donegal to Kerry, are liable to periodic seasons of distress. This arises largely from the conditions of the climate, and to the 'clouds of the Atlantic' obstructing the vivifying influence of the sun, chilling the atmosphere, and deluging the land with rain. I do not now make reference to a famine of food, but to a famine of *fuel*. This may sound strange in the ears of those who have heard of or seen the immense tracts of bog which stretch out to great distances in various parts of the West. Yet, nevertheless, such has been frequently the case, and considerable hardship thereby suffered. It was long the practice not to commence the cutting of turf till the month of June, so that when autumn turned out rainy the peats became so saturated with wet as to be useless for firing. Such a season was prevalent in the latter part of the fifties, extending into 1860 and 1861. The scarcity of turf was universal throughout the country, and in some districts the dearth of it was absolute.

In many places the people were in a shocking condition for want of fuel, and almost everywhere the privation was very great. Coal had hitherto been almost a luxury confined to the wealthier classes, and to the residents of seaport towns and neighbourhoods. Indeed, there were few houses in the country or even in towns fitted with grates suitable for the burning of coal. Had the people gone to the cutting of turf early in the spring instead of waiting till midsummer, when all the crops had been sown or planted, they could, even in a wet season, have saved considerable quantities, and thus have averted the serious calamity which befel them. The wisdom of doing this had been often urged on them, but without effect. They adhered to their traditional custom of beginning to cut turf only after all their agricultural operations had been completed, notwithstanding the warnings of past experience and the advice of those interested in their welfare. At this period the turf, though cut, lay wet and worthless in the bogs. Troops of boys and girls might be seen literally carrying away the material of the road fences on their backs. Many of the fences being made of turf, these were broken up, and the best part carried off for fuel. Straw, dried furze, brambles, and everything which could be picked up which would serve, however imperfectly, for the purpose were utilized. These facts will serve to show to what a fearful state the poor had been reduced for want of firing.

The necessity for action was recognised in every quarter, and 'fuel funds' were organized in order to meet the emergency. In Ballina a committee was formed at a public meeting presided over by the then Colonel Knox Gore. The committee included the clergy of all denominations, and the secretaries, three in number, were members of three different Churches — Episcopalian and Roman Catholic and myself, as a Presbyterian. The subscriptions to the fund were about £200 the first year and £350 the second year, Lord Arran and Colonel Gore giving £30 each, and the shopkeepers all contributed liberally. The fund was formed on the principle that coals should be in all cases

distributed at half price, and that no gratuitous relief should be given, it being considered that if the principle of gratuitous distribution were admitted it would be impossible to draw the line of distinction, and say who should receive coals free and who not. On the whole the system worked admirably. In Ballina nearly 700 families were assisted. The price charged was 7d. per cwt., which, it was calculated, would give each family a sufficient supply for a week at the rate of 1d. per day.

A difficulty arose from the want of grates, as the coal could not burn as the turf did heaped on the hearthstones. Some absurd mistakes also were made. The people, accustomed to using a large quantity of turf at a time, heaped up the coal in a similar way, so that a week's supply would be burned at once. They were instructed and warned on this point. Grates also were provided of an appropriate, cheap, and moveable kind to be placed on the hearth. Various plans were adopted for drying the turf at the fireside with more or less success. Expedients were also tried to reduce the peat to a smaller bulk and harder consistency by expelling the watery substance and compressing the mass. These projects proved a failure, or were not carried out on any extensive scale.

On the whole the Ballina Fuel Relief Committee worked well and harmoniously till, unhappily, towards the close of the proceedings an occurrence took place which for a while disturbed the peace hitherto prevailing. As stated above, the fund was formed on the principle of not giving gratuitous relief, but of selling the coals at a reduced price. It was, however, proposed to abandon this and supply the fuel free of charge. This was resisted as contrary to the original constitution of the fund, on the faith of which the largest portion of the money had been subscribed; but the new plan was insisted on, and it was made even to assume a religious aspect. The contending parties were about equal in number, though the original system was secretly sympathized with by many who did not venture to express their views openly. At a largely attended meeting there were some hot words.

Ultimately the decision was in favour of maintaining the principle and plan acted on from the beginning. The operations went on without further differences, and the fund was wound up, having been the means of promoting the comfort of thousands, and of tiding them over their troubles till the advent of a more auspicious season.

CHAPTER XXX

I HAVE already referred to 'two distinct and independent evangelistic agencies' at Ballinglen. The first, both in order of time and importance, was that of the mission of the Irish Presbyterian Church then conducted by the Rev. Michael Brannigan. The second was that of the Agricultural Farm and Educational Institute under the control of the Edinburgh Ladies' Society. This Society had been originally constituted to support our Assembly's Irish Mission, which it carried out for several years. But when the farm had been bought and the institute started, it became desirous to concentrate its energies and efforts on that work. By degrees contributions to the Irish Mission, and payment towards the salary of Mr. Allen, the superintendent of the mission schools, were withdrawn, as the means were not found to be what had been expected. The farm, which should have been not only self-supporting, but able to maintain the institute with its teacher and boarders, had been greatly mismanaged, and was carried on at a serious annual loss. This caused much vexation and disappointment. In their difficulties the members of the Society had recourse to what we considered unworthy expedients, and which brought them into collision not only with Mr. Allen but with the General Assembly.

At this period there was what was termed the Biennial Deputation, which, by arrangement with the Free Church, visited Scotland every second year to plead the cause of the Irish Mission and got valuable aid. For some years the Scottish Ladies countenanced and co-operated

with our deputation to the manifest advantage of both. But they began to think that whatever moneys came to our mission would be so much out of their pocket, which was a great mistake. In the newspaper press and in pamphlets they endeavoured to produce an unfavourable impression on the Scottish mind regarding the cause generally and Mr. Allen in particular. There was one person who specially incurred their displeasure—that was Mr. Patteson. He had long been resident in Edinburgh, and at this time had been appointed by our Assembly to act as agent in Scotland to arrange the deputations and raise the funds. He was faithful to his trust, and because of his fidelity and independence his removal was demanded. Charges of a most frivolous and groundless nature were made against him, which on investigation were all refuted, and he continued at his post till his removal to Belfast as financial agent of our Church.

But the person who came most under the lash of the ladies and their friends was Mr. Allen, his offence being that he would not dis sever himself from the Assembly. Accordingly, ministers and others assailed him and his work in the columns of the public press, displaying a very evil spirit, and all the more grievous coming from and inspired by those towards whom he had always acted in a most kind and friendly manner. He replied in a pamphlet, and in a style worthy of the man. He says, 'In conclusion I would say to the Ladies' Committee and their secretaries, you greatly misapprehend my spirit, my thoughts, and feelings if you think that I am jealous of or opposed to your new efforts in establishing schools of your own in Connaught. If you carry on your work in a spirit of harmony, with other kindred agencies and with that charity which thinketh no evil, and worketh no ill to your neighbour, I wish you all success. Let it be the Lord's work done in the spirit of your Divine Master for His glory. May it prosper! More, much more, than we all can do is needed, but if you continue seeking to subvert the R.C. Mission of the Irish Church, which you have been professing to aid, and if you seek to overthrow my work, in which I have been engaged

for fourteen years, which has been instrumental, through the blessing of God, of much good, and which is as efficient in its educational and Scriptural operations and results as it ever was when most commended by you, may you not fear that in so doing you are not furthering but hindering the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in this dark land ?'

In this affair Mr. Brannigan was placed in an unpleasant position. On the one hand he was in thorough sympathy with Mr. Allen, whom he always regarded as his father in the Gospel, and his best friend and counsellor. On the other hand, the ladies and he had been brought into intimate and friendly relations. They had been mutual helpers. As residents in the Glen for part of each year, and members of his church, the intimacy and good feeling had been quite marked. They had expected he would have taken their side. But with his well-known soundness of judgment and singleness of purpose he cast in his lot with his father and brethren in the ministry. For this he was made to suffer in many ways. He was deprived of a school-house for which he had raised all the funds. The ladies withdrew themselves and the inmates of the institute from attendance on his church, and set up a rival service of their own, and tried to turn him into ridicule and reproach. But he could not be moved from his integrity. The Connaught Presbytery took their stand, and made no uncertain sound. They passed a series of resolutions expressive of their confidence in the management of the mission schools, and of their sympathy with him both in the difficulties and serious responsibilities he had to encounter in raising the necessary funds, and in the present annoyances to which he had been so unwarrantably subjected. This latter was very gratifying to Mr. Allen, as I know the vulgar and insulting language of the letters had grievously wounded his spirit, and I believe also tended to the shortening of his days.

It should be mentioned that the matters in question had been referred to the settlement of the Moderators of the General Assembly of the Free Church and the Irish General Assembly in 1861, these being respectively the Rev.

Dr. Candlish and the Rev. John Macnaughtan, both Scotchmen, and the former the pastor of the congregation to which the secretaries of the Ladies' Society belonged. Their decision was submitted to the Board of Missions and the Scottish Deputation, and was unanimously adopted by them both. Mr. Allen fully concurred, but the Ladies' Society refused and rejected it. This was a pity, for it had been hoped peace would have been restored, and a spirit of harmony and mutual helpfulness return. But it was not so to be, and henceforth the breach was complete and abiding.

After this separation the affairs of the farm and institute went from bad to worse. It was not to be wondered at. For a committee in Edinburgh to think they could manage a farm in the West of Ireland, then far distant from railways, public conveyances, or even a public market, was Utopian in the highest degree. Gradually the pupils were discharged, the land turned into grazing, and ultimately it became the private property of one of the ladies who had advanced a considerable sum on mortgage to clear off the former and existing liabilities.

This was considered by many as unfair to the shareholders, who had invested in the concern expecting it to be conducted as a model farm and a training institution in agriculture for the young men. Some proposed to try the case at law, but it was decided not to interpose. The trustees of the property, at a meeting of the members in Edinburgh, submitted a statement of accounts which showed that the estate was hopelessly in debt, and proposed that the affairs should be wound up. Doubtless the gentlemen were glad to wash their hands of all responsibility, and the proposal was agreed to. Thus the project which had been so promisingly started, and which for a time appeared so prosperous, utterly collapsed. Into the causes of this failure I do not further enter, nor at this time is it desirable to do so.

The Edinburgh Ladies' Society had published a monthly periodical entitled *A Voice from Ireland*. The first number appeared in 1850, and the last in April, 1874. I have both before me as I write. In the earlier numbers

there are communications from the Rev. Mr. Allen, the Rev. Mr. Brannigan, the Rev. John Hall, then of Camlin, Boyle ; the Rev. Dr. Magee, the Rev. Dr. Smyth, the Rev. M. Kerr, the Rev. G. S. Keegan, the Rev. Mr. Crotty, the Rev. Malcolm M'Gregor, and many others, several of whom have fallen asleep, but others remain unto this day. Mutually helpful as our ministers and the Scottish Society were, what a pity that envy and jealousy should have separated choice friends, rendered a cause, which had so fair a beginning, by a series of mistakes, into a succession of disasters, given occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully, and hindered the progress of truth in that region at least for a season.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE year 1859 is memorable in the history of our Church for the great revival of religion which then took place. The religious awakening which had been going on in some parts of Ulster had become extended and intensified. While other denominations more or less came under its influence its chief effects were realized in the congregations of the General Assembly. The annual meeting of our Supreme Court was this year held in Dublin, when full information was given by those ministers who had taken a leading part in the movement, and a profound impression was produced as to the reality of this work of grace. Anxious to see for myself the operations of this religious awakening, I proceeded at the close of the Assembly, accompanied by my friend, Mr. Brown of Turlough, and visited Belfast and other places. We attended Sabbath and week-day services, and called at the houses of persons who were, to use the phrase of the day, stricken or prostrated. We were much pleased and edified by what came under our observation, and could not doubt but that the work was of God, and that the Holy Spirit had been abundantly poured out from on high. There were some drawbacks in our judgment, such as the physical manifestations of various kinds, but the clear evidence afforded of the genuine conversions of many sinners, the zeal and piety of the converts, the improved and elevated tone of morality throughout the general community, all tended to prove that 1859 was not, as some called it, a year of delusion, but 'a year of grace.'

Connaught, with which I am more specially concerned,

came in for some droppings of the showers of blessings. The ministers who had been in Dublin and in Ulster returned solemnly and deeply impressed. They called the frequent attention of their congregations to the subject. Their preaching became, as it were, more earnest and evangelistic, their prayers more fervent and importunate, and their dealings with anxious inquirers were very direct. Meetings were held, not only congregational, but also united services, in which ministers of other denominations took part. Ministers from the revival districts in Ulster came to help us, and their addresses were very serviceable. As a result not a few were savingly impressed, and evidenced by their life and conversation the reality of the spiritual change which they affirmed had come on them. Attendance on the Sabbath and other services improved, and a general seriousness and solemnity pervaded the community. Partly owing to the fewness of our numbers there was little excitement and no physical manifestations experienced as elsewhere, but the work was not the less real, and its effects were abiding.

The Connaught Presbytery experienced great changes in the year 1862. No fewer than five ministers resigned their charges, three of them on appointment as Colonial missionaries, and two removed to other spheres of labour in Ireland. These were the Rev. Matthew Kerr, of Dromore West ; the Rev. James Love, of Hollymount ; the Rev. John Wilson, of Killala ; the Rev. Samuel Wilson, of Hollymount ; and the Rev. John Wilson, of Collooney. Mr. Kerr's resignation of Dromore West was caused by his appointment by the Board of Missionary Directors as itinerant missionary in Munster ; the Rev. James Love, the Rev. John Wilson, of Killala, and the Rev. Samuel Wilson were designated as missionaries to Queensland ; and the Rev. John Wilson of Collooney, resigned, having accepted a call from the congregation of Ervey, in the Presbytery of Bailieborough. Of the above five, the three who went to Australia are all dead, the other two survive to this day.* Mr. Wilson, of Killala, was succeeded by a namesake, who was not

* Since died.

a relative. This latter removed to Lecumpher, and has since died. On the day of his ordination the brother of his predecessor, the Rev. Samuel Wilson, resigned the pastorate of Hollymount, and was designated as missionary to Queensland. What led to his resignation was the delicate state of his health, and having been advised by medical men to remove to a more genial clime, as it was necessary for the continuance of his life that he should give up ministerial work in this country. Both these brothers made full proof of their ministry both in Connaught and in the land of their adoption, but their lives in Australia were very brief. Mr. Love's ministry was not much of a success. In Connaught he had been rather remarkable for being a very pronounced Presbyterian and anti-Prelatist. However, in Australia he so far modified his views as to join the Episcopal Church there, and was ordained by Episcopal hands.

Of the two surviving members of this company it is unnecessary for me to say anything of Mr. Kerr, as he has been long before the Church, and his reputation established, first as an indefatigable itinerant missionary in the Province of Munster, and afterwards as the earnest minister of Queen Street congregation in Cork city.

As to Collooney to which the third Mr. John Wilson so industriously and ably ministered for a while, a few words may be needful, as few even in the Connaught Presbytery know anything about its history in connection with our Church. Collooney is a small market town, situated about six miles from Sligo. It stands on the river Owenbeg, which supplies sufficient water-power for the working of extensive corn and flour mills. These were at the time of which I write in the hands of a Scotchman, who was possessed of considerable means, and gave employment to a large number of persons, the principal of whom, like the owner, were Scotch and Presbyterian, while others of the same country and faith were resident in the neighbourhood. Dr. Edgar took a great interest in the place, and was prepared to give substantial aid towards the organization of a congregation and the erection of a church.

Mr. Wilson, who had laboured as a missionary in Tullamore and Roscommon, was sent to Collooney by the Board of Missions in 1858, and was received by the Presbytery as an ordained minister. On arrival his first difficulty was to get a house in which to conduct the services, but ultimately he obtained the use of the market-house. The audience at first was small, but it increased to the number of seventy or eighty, some of whom were of the highest respectability. They promised to subscribe sufficiently to secure the R.D., the mill owner putting down his name for £20 annually and £200 for the building of a church, and others were liberal according to their means. I presided at the meeting, and a memorial was sent to the Presbytery to have Collooney organized into a congregation. They appointed Mr. Wilson and myself as a deputation to wait on the principal landowner to ask him for a site to build on. He replied that if there were fifteen Presbyterians resident he would comply with the request. A document was drawn up and signed by fifty-four as Presbyterians. On its being presented to the landowner he told Mr. Wilson very plainly that he would grant no site, adding that these Presbyterians must either join his church or go to Sligo. Application was then made to another landlord, who at first consented to give a site, but under the influence of the former withdrew from his promise, and refused to see Mr. Wilson when he again called. Other attempts were made for the object in view, but without success. The people were much disappointed and disheartened. Other untoward events occurred which rendered the idea of organizing the congregation inexpedient, and on Mr. Wilson's removing to Ervey, Collooney, as a mission station, was put under the charge of the Rev. John Ashmore, of Creevelea, who continues to hold regular week-day services there.

It may here be stated that two other ministerial changes occurred shortly after. In February, 1863, the Rev. Robert McClelland resigned the charge of the mission station of Carrick-on-Shannon, he having been appointed by the Board of Missions as one of the itinerating missionaries in Munster. In September, 1864, the Rev. Robert A.

Caldwell resigned the pastoral charge of the congregation of Boyle, and was designated as missionary to the colony of New South Wales, to which he had been appointed by the Board of Missions.

In the early part of 1863 an event occurred of national importance, and which stirred up the feelings of the people of the three kingdoms, who manifested very distinctly their loving and loyal attachment to the Royal Family. I refer to the marriage of the Prince of Wales to the Princess Alexandra of Denmark. The reason I mention this arises from the fact that it was made the occasion of unseemly demonstrations of disloyalty in the town of Ballina, leading to scenes of disorder and disturbance. A portion of the community had resolved to illuminate their houses in honour of the event. During the day flags obtained from the shipping in the port were displayed from the windows. One of these a Danish flag, whose colour is yellow, was considered to be an orange flag, and caused considerable irritation. It so happened that a lecture on 'Geology' had been arranged to be given by a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, while I was selected to give a suitable address on the occasion of the auspicious event of the Royal marriage. But I was not allowed the opportunity, for in the course of the lecture specimens of the geological formation of the neighbourhood were sent into the room in the form of showers of stones, smashing the windows and striking several ladies and gentlemen of the audience. There was great confusion and alarm on the part of some, while a number of the bolder spirits resolved to repel and retaliate on the assailants. The hall had been decorated with flags, and also with swords and bayonets, artistically arrayed. These weapons had been obtained from the barracks of the militia staff. They were now laid hold of, and the young men prepared to march out on the mob. Had they done so lives might have been lost, and it is painful to think of the scenes which would have been enacted. I interposed and calmed down my young friends, with whom I had considerable influence, and they said they would be entirely guided by me. On

leaving the lecture hall we found the town in a state of great disorder. Mobs were going about wrecking the windows in which were illuminations, and indulging in seditious language. There was sufficient constabulary force to quell the rioters, but they were without a head. The Resident Magistrate was found in a friend's house, partaking of refreshments and quite indifferent to the condition of matters. Being sharply remonstrated with he put the police in motion, and order was soon restored. Several of the worst offenders were brought before the magistrates at Petty Sessions, and some of them were committed to take their trial at the next assizes, and, being convicted, were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment according to their degrees of guilt. Others were summarily dealt with by the magistrates, who consigned them to prison without the option of a fine, which was a great disappointment, as money had been collected and ostentatiously displayed in the court-house to pay the fines they expected to be imposed. The result was satisfactory, peace and order were restored, and matters resumed their ordinary and normal state of calmness and quietude in the town of Ballina.

CHAPTER XXXII

MORE than once I have referred to Ballinglen, and the state of the matters there, both in connection with the mission work of the Irish Presbyterian Church and that of the Scottish Ladies' Society. I have now to record an event of a calamitous nature which befel Mr. Brannigan's church and manse. The Presbytery of Connaught had met in Ballina on November 7, 1864. At a late period of the proceedings, Mr. Brannigan arrived with the startling intelligence that on the previous night the entire church premises had been burned to the ground. It seems that a flame had suddenly burst forth in an upper room of the manse, in which there was no fireplace, by the ignition apparently of some timber which communicated with a funnel of the chimney. The house was soon on fire, and so rapid and destructive was its progress that notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of the neighbours, who had speedily gathered together, very little could be saved. The furniture, the beds, the house linen, the clothing, and other articles were consumed, and all Mr. Brannigan's books and manuscripts were destroyed. A communion service, presented by Scottish friends, and which had been carefully kept in a drawer, was melted away. As the manse and church adjoined, and in fact constituted part of one building, the roof of the latter caught the flame, and it also was reduced to ashes. None of the family—thirteen persons in all, including his wife, children, and grandchildren—perished, but the younger ones had a very narrow escape. By a singular providence they had not retired to rest till an hour much later than usual. A music teacher and piano tuner had been with them that evening, and the

younger ones had been so interested that they sat up. Had they gone to bed as usual, there is no doubt that from the peculiar construction of the house, which became filled with smoke and flames, it would have been impossible to rescue some of them. The family took refuge in the neighbouring cabins until they got the use of a house which had been long untenanted. Here the children slept for some time on straw spread on the second floor under such covering as could be got. Mrs. Brannigan and her daughter, Mrs. O'Flaherty, got a home in the cottage of a coastguard at Belderig, ten miles distant—a place which was one of Mr. Brannigan's preaching stations.

Happily, the premises were insured, and in this there was something remarkable if not providential. Some months previous to this catastrophe Mr. Brannigan had been in Scotland pleading the cause of the schools and orphanage on behalf of the superintendent, Mr. Allen. In Dundee he became acquainted with the agent of an insurance office, who promised to help him in the work provided he insured the church premises, which up to that date had not been done, and also his own life. This was agreed to, and only one premium had been paid when the fire took place. Thus the buildings were restored without requiring any appeal to be made for subscriptions from the Christian public. It was also very fortunate that his own life was insured at that time, as the state of his health soon after would have made it difficult, if not impossible, of accomplishment. As he was not the minister of an organized congregation he had not been a member of the Widows' Fund, and though at one time a movement was made to remedy this, somehow the project fell through. The insurance so timely effected was, at his death in 1874, found very serviceable in furnishing some provision for a part of his family.

With his usual buoyancy of spirit Mr. Brannigan was not only sustained, but enabled even to rejoice in his tribulation. He felt so thankful that none of his children had perished in the flames, and in this he traced, as well he might, the good hand of his God. Soon after the calamitous event

the Lord visited his people in Ballinglen with a remarkable revival of religion. Mr. Brannigan improved the period by diligent visiting of the families, and holding meetings for prayer, to the gladdening of his own heart and the profit of many. Though the church had been destroyed, the congregation was accommodated for public worship on Sabbaths and week-days in a house which had been repaired and fitted up for a congregational and mission school. The peculiar circumstances of the case did largely evoke the sympathy and generous aid of Christian friends everywhere.

Passing over occurrences of a more or less interesting nature, and as I am desirous to bring these reminiscences to an early termination, I proceed to write of an event of deep concern to the Irish Mission, and which gave a turn to the current of my own life and history. I refer to the death of the Rev. Robert Allen, the superintendent of the Connaught Mission Schools and of the Ballina Orphanage, of which latter he was also the founder. His appointment by the General Assembly was made in 1848, and for several years he laboured with zeal and assiduity in a cause which was very near and dear to his heart. Never of a robust frame, he was latterly, from age and growing infirmities, incapacitated from taking such an active part in the work as he desired. Mr. Brannigan and myself helped in the organization of auxiliaries in Ireland, and also in Britain, but we never interfered in his management of the schools and orphanage. The death of a beloved daughter in 1864, with the worry and anxiety caused by the unseemly attacks of former friends, deeply affected his health. He gradually sank till April 1, 1865, when he calmly and peacefully fell asleep in Jesus. He possessed the full assurance of faith, and died as he had lived, rejoicing in hope, giving glory to God. Almost his last words were 'Praise the Lord.'

Mr. Allen was greatly esteemed, both in the church generally, and by the people among whom his lot had been cast in the latter part of his life. His funeral was largely attended by members of all classes and creeds, and his remains were removed to the family burial-ground in

Stewartstown, Co. Tyrone, where he had been minister until his removal to Connaught.

The General Assembly placed the following on their minutes in July, 1865 :

RESOLVED—‘That this Assembly have heard of the death of the Rev. Robert Allen, Ballina, with the deepest regret ; that they recognise the grace of God, which rendered him so eminent in piety, devoted in zeal, and consistent in life. They record with gratitude to God that their departed brother was sustained through a long and able ministry, and was led in the wise arrangements of Divine Providence to devote himself for seventeen years to the work of the Connaught Mission Schools, where, in the capacity of superintendent, he laboured with happy influence and a large measure of success. They hereby express their sympathy with his bereaved family, and direct that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to them, with a letter from the Moderator.’

A handsome tablet was erected in the Ballina Church in the wall over the pew which he and his family had so long occupied. As the inscription was prepared by myself it may be taken as indicating my own sentiments and feelings. It runs thus :

IN MEMORY OF
THE REV. ROBERT ALLEN,

Thirty-four years minister of Stewartson, County Tyrone, and subsequently for seventeen years superintendant of the Mission and Schools of the Presbyterian Church in Connaught, and founder of the adjoining Orphanage.

‘A wise counsellor, clothed with humility, strong in faith, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. In labours abundant, in afflictions, in much patience, by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by love unfeigned, approving himself as a minister of God.’

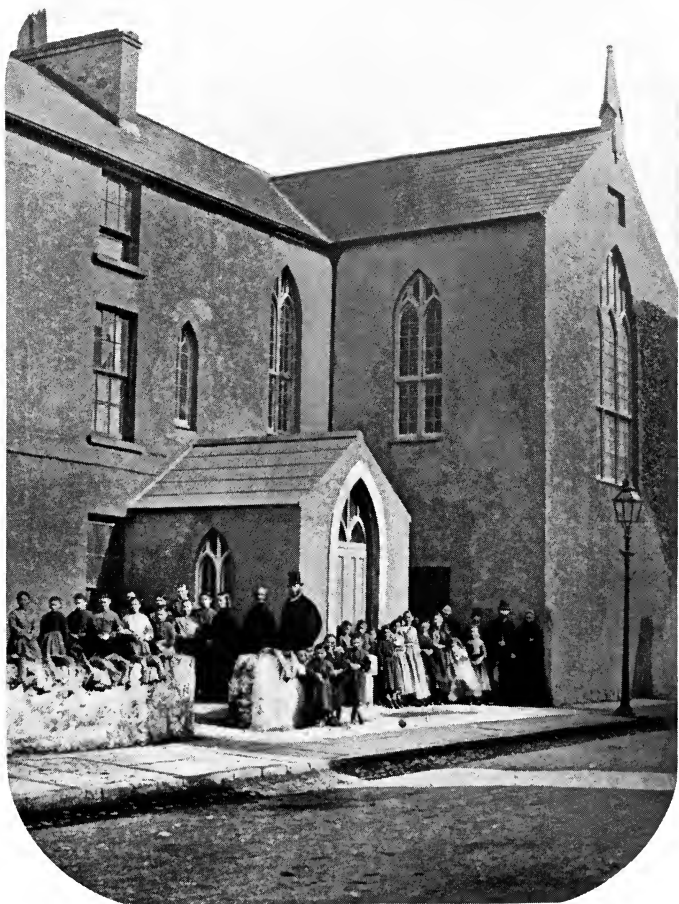
BORN MDCCLXXXIX., DIED MDCCCLXV.

‘They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.’—(Dan. xii. 3.)

Erected by numerous friends in token of their affection and appreciation of his worth.

The death of Mr. Allen was reported by the Connaught Presbytery to the Board of Missionary Directors at its meeting in Derry on April 12. At the same time they requested that arrangements should be made to supply the place, and maintain the work which had been committed to Mr. Allen. Whereupon the Board appointed the Rev. Thomas Armstrong *ad interim* superintendent of the schools until the meeting of Assembly, and deputed Dr. Edgar and Mr. Armstrong to visit the schools and report on their present state. This having been submitted to the Assembly, after several conferences between a Committee of Assembly and the Connaught Presbytery and the Board of Missions, a series of resolutions was adopted, in which all the parties concurred, and by which the subsequent arrangement and management of the schools and orphanage were settled. For some time I continued to discharge the twofold duties of minister of the Ballina congregation and superintendent of the schools and orphanage. But I soon discovered that I could not efficiently do this double work. My frequent absences from home, though my pulpit was well supplied by the Board of Missions, told injuriously on the interests of the congregation, and, on the other hand, I was not able to devote the necessary time to the organization and visiting of auxiliaries that was required for the raising of the necessary funds. Hence I signified my purpose to confine myself to one of them, leaving it to the Assembly to determine which. I was by no means eager to give up a congregation deeply attached to me, where my labours were anything but onerous, and having everything a minister's heart could wish, in order to undertake the arduous and responsible office of superintendent of the mission schools, involving considerable labour and anxiety, continual toil and travel, and the discomforts of not having a settled home. Other considerations also weighed with me, such as the disestablishment of the Episcopal Church and disendowment of our own, which I saw would call forth all the energies of minister and people in the direction of sustentation, and I feared would seriously hamper me in my appeals for pecuniary aid.

But the importunity of my brethren in the mission field and other friends prevailed. So casting myself in faith on the good providence of my God, and on the kindly co-operation and countenance of those who were to be my associates in the work, I with reluctance resigned the congregation of Ballina on April 11, 1868, to carry on the work begun by my revered predecessor. This I have done conscientiously to the best of my ability, with what efficiency and success it is for others to say.



BALLINA ORPHANAGE.

[To face page 182.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ON the occasion of my resignation of the Ballina congregation the following resolutions were adopted by the Connaught Presbytery, which I may be allowed now to reproduce :

‘The Rev. Thomas Armstrong having accepted the office of Superintendent to the Scriptural Schools in Connaught, and having, therefore, resigned the charge of the Ballina congregation.

‘Resolved—That the Presbytery of Connaught hereby record their appreciation of Mr. Armstrong’s many sterling qualities, his kindness and hospitality as a Christian gentleman, his faithfulness and success as a minister of Christ, and the eminent services he has rendered to the cause of truth in Ballina during a period of twenty-two years.

‘That it gives them pleasure to know, though Mr. Armstrong is to be separated from them as the minister of a congregation, he is still to be with them as a co-presbyter. His natural amiability, his gentlemanly deportment, his zeal for the diffusion of Scriptural knowledge, and his intimate acquaintance with the late venerable and judicious superintendent, the Rev. Robert Allen, warrant them to look forward with much hope to his success in his present sphere of duty.

‘That the Presbytery tender to him, for his encouragement, their cordial co-operation in extending by every means in their power the glory of God, and promoting the good of man through the agency of Scriptural education.

‘Extracted from Minutes of Presbytery,

‘ANDREW BROWN, Clerk.’

Deeply interested as I naturally was in the Ballina congregation, the choice of a successor to me in the pastorate

gave me much concern. In reference to it I published in the *Missionary Herald* to the following effect : ' The congregation is now in a healthy and vigorous state ; our cause is well known and respected by all classes in the community. The four mission schools and lay agency under the supervision of the minister, with other facilities and opportunities of usefulness, furnish an attractive and interesting field of labour. To a young man of talent and earnest piety there is no place in the South or West of a more inviting and encouraging character. The church buildings are free of debt, with congregational machinery in regular and harmonious operation. The new pastor can therefore at once enter on his work without any of those embarrassing secularities which so hamper and hinder young ministers, who are obliged to employ that energy and time in collecting money which they ought to have entirely devoted to their spiritual duties. We trust the Lord will soon provide for the people of Ballina a pastor after His own heart, and that our cause there will flourish far more than ever it has done.'

There were several candidates for the vacancy—good and able men—and there was some difficulty in making a choice. At one time there seemed little prospect of agreement, and it was gravely proposed to make the selection by lot ; this, however, was over-ruled as not in accordance with the code of discipline. As I still occupied the manse the candidates stopped in my house, and I had abundant opportunity of testing their personal as well as public qualifications. I had my favourites, though I kept aloof from interfering with the free choice of the people, though I was often urged to name the one I deemed the best and fittest. There was one who to my mind was first in order of merit, but the congregation did not choose him. I may only say that his future more than justified my opinion, as he now occupies a high position in the church. Ultimately all parties came to a unanimous choice, and thereon I signified my cordial approval. My successor, the Rev. Robert Duff, of the Ahoghill Presbytery, was ordained on December 30, 1868.

In the evening of the ordination a public *soirée* was held, and was largely attended. Several interesting speeches were delivered. Mr. Duff was presented by the ladies with a handsome pulpit gown and also a Bible, with an address of welcome, to which he made a suitable reply. I was not forgotten, but received the gift of a costly gold watch and appendages, with an inscription, which I may as well give, as I still have the watch: 'Presented to Rev. Thomas Armstrong by the Ballina congregation a token of affectionate regard and appreciation of his faithful and efficient services during a ministry of twenty-two years, with their best wishes for his welfare and success as a superintendent of the Connaught Mission Schools.'

Mr. Duff continued minister of Ballina till January 31, 1877, when he resigned, having accepted a call to St. George's Presbyterian Church, Liverpool. When the Disestablishment and Disendowment took place he commuted his interest in the *Regium Donum*. Taking into account the difference between his age and mine there was a clear gain to the Commutation Fund of £342, more than if I had remained as minister of Ballina till the date of Disendowment.

The Rev. Dr. Edgar died in the sixty-ninth year of his age, on August 26, 1866. His connection with and earnest efforts for the temporal and spiritual welfare of Connaught have already been referred to, and need now not be repeated; suffice it to say that he was a warm personal friend of mine, and took a leading part in my appointment as superintendent of the schools. After Mr. Allen's death, he and I, by the instructions of the General Assembly, visited and examined the schools throughout the province, and made a report recommending their continuance and extension. On subsequent occasions I had the honour and pleasure of accompanying him in his frequent tours in the West.

In May, 1866, he visited Ballina, and the last Sabbath on which he ever preached was in my pulpit. He spoke

with great difficulty and even pain, as he was then suffering from that throat affection which ultimately proved fatal. In him I lost a fast friend and wise counsellor.

Dr. Edgar was always engaged in acts of patriotic and Christian philanthropy. It is not my province to enter upon these at any length, but I can only and briefly refer to his connection with Connaught. His first efforts in its behalf were in rousing the public mind to a sense of the horrors of that famine which caused such wide-spread desolation through all its borders. His labours in raising money for the relief of the starving were great. How many thousands of pounds were contributed through him I cannot tell, but they were many, and helped to save many lives. Not content with this he laboured through the agency of Scriptural and industrial schools to train the young to habits of industry, and to cherish a spirit of self-reliance and independence, while the circulation of the Scriptures and instruction in the saving truths of the Gospel were ever near to his heart.

Through that school system which he largely contributed to found and foster many thousands were trained to spend useful lives on earth, and were prepared for the better life hereafter. He took a deep interest in the congregational and missionary work of our Presbyterian Church in Connaught. Every year at the close of the sittings of the General Assembly he paid a series of visits, coming into close and kindly touch with the ministers, making himself fully conversant with their work, their requirements, difficulties, and prospects. Out of the funds entrusted to him for distribution he gave liberally to the erection of school-houses, manses, and churches in the West of Ireland. In the report of the Home Mission for 1864 he stated that in Connaught fourteen churches and as many manses had been erected within a few years. Of £2,500, the amount of the gifts placed at his disposal, a short time before his death £2,000 came to Connaught.

Another distinguished man who honoured me with his friendship died not long after Dr. Edgar, I mean the Rev.

Henry Cooke, D.D., LL.D. I had attended his ministry when I was a student in Belfast, and also was one of the moral philosophy class conducted by him and Dr. Molyneux when the synods had lost confidence in the Professor of Moral Philosophy in the Belfast College.

In a former chapter I have given an account of Dr. Cooke's visits to Connaught—first to Westport in 1821, and in 1830 to Ballinglen, for the purpose of opening the new church erected by the efforts of Mr. Brannigan, and finally in July, 1831, when he came to open the Ballina Church. He made that journey at considerable personal inconvenience; there was no railway nearer than Portadown. I felt that he had consented to my earnest request for his valuable services very much as a compliment to myself, as well as from an ardent desire to advance the cause of Presbyterianism in the far West, and in so acting he did the Church good service.

Not long after my appointment as superintendent of the schools and orphanages, he departed this life, on December 13, 1868, in the eighty-first year of his age, and the sixty-first of his ministry.

I cannot but give one more obituary notice—that of Mr. David Ker Clarke, the faithful friend and devoted admirer of both Dr. Cooke and Dr. Edgar. He was a native of Kilmore, co. Down, and received a collegiate education with a view to the ministry, which, however, he did not enter. He was a ripe scholar, and being possessed of ample private means he gave generously to religious and philanthropic objects.

Dr. Edgar found him an invaluable ally in organizing his bazaars. He was especially interested in the Western province, a favourite phrase of his being 'benighted but beloved Connaught.' When I started in 1848 to collect for the erection of the contemplated church and manse in Ballina he proved a zealous and effective adviser and helper. His great experience in such work was invaluable, and the success attending my efforts in Belfast, and through Ulster and Scotland, is largely to be ascribed to Mr. Clarke. In

fact, it was he who initiated me into the art and mystery of that begging occupation in which, so far as length of time and extensive experience is concerned, I ought to be somewhat of a proficient. Mr. Clarke died in 1858 at the age of fifty-nine. Having well served his day and generation he fell on sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ON my appointment as *interim* superintendent of the Connaught Schools and Orphanage, and while still minister of Ballina congregation, I set about organizing auxiliaries in Ireland, also in Scotland and England. This occupied much time, and involved considerable labour. In my frequent absences the Board of Missions sent suitable supplies of ordained ministers and licentiates, and the congregation was well maintained. The Plymouthists' invasion hardly affected us, though it was a source of considerable anxiety and trouble. In fact, only a couple of families were disjoined from us, while other denominations, especially the Episcopalians, suffered heavily, quite a number of the gentry class having given in their adherence to the lay preachers, as they were called, and some of them were publicly baptized by immersion. One young man of business, who had been a member of my congregation, made himself conspicuous by his zeal in propagating the peculiar views of the Plymouthists. One of his special topics was the moral law. He told me that it was too low a standard for him as a spiritual man. I had some suspicions, which were afterwards found to be true, that he was rather lax in his practice, and I replied that there was only one word in the Ten Commandments he would object to, the word 'not.' It was an arrow from a bow 'drawn at a venture,' but it pierced to the quick, and he did not attempt a reply. His case, however, I must say, was a solitary one, the members of the new society being, apart from their peculiar doctrinal views, both religious and moral. After a time, when excite-

ment cooled down, I maintained friendly relations with them, and was treated by them with much friendliness and kindness.

My first efforts in the organizing of auxiliaries were naturally directed to Ireland. I was accustomed to spend two months at a time from home—the period between one bi-monthly meeting of the Mission Board and the next. This I did even in the depth of winter. I was everywhere received with cheerful welcome by my ministerial brethren, and enjoyed their generous hospitality and that of their wives. I thus formed acquaintanceship with a number of the excellent of the earth, both old and young, whom I had not previously known owing to my isolated and distant locality in Connaught. From observation of them I was led to form a very high opinion of their ability, eloquence, and earnest effort in the Master's work, in all which they can bear a most favourable comparison with Scottish or English ministers. Through their countenance and encouragement a number of auxiliaries and ladies' associations were organized, and Sabbath schools led to take a practical interest in the Connaught Mission. Not only in Dublin and Belfast, but throughout Ulster and elsewhere, success attended my efforts, so that the funds were considerably increased. In a short time the annual income was more than doubled. The ladies who acted as secretaries were and are most zealous and energetic. The collectors also do their part most cheerfully and successfully, and I may take this opportunity of recording my cordial thanks to all these friends for their sympathetic and effective help to myself and the good cause I have the honour to represent.

Nor did I confine my attentions to Ireland. In Scotland there had been some associations, especially in Glasgow, formed in Mr. Allen's time. Most of them had been falling off in their contributions; mainly because of their not being regularly visited owing to Mr. Allen's advanced age and growing infirmities. I succeeded in reviving these and establishing others, so that at the time when the Scottish Association for Irish Missions was formed, some eight years

ago by Dr. Magee and myself, I was receiving annually a sum of nearly £400, with a prospect of increase.

England also received a due share of attention. The cause had staunch friends both in Liverpool and Manchester. In the former city Mr. Reid had established an association called the Islington Sabbath School Auxiliary. Islington Presbyterian congregation was largely composed of Irish people, and by them and others the cause was liberally supported. I also collected subscriptions as I did in Manchester, where Mr. John Stuart, the founder of the orphanage, resided, and whose influence and example largely contributed to my success. Besides his annual subscription he gave on one occasion £100 to improve the orphanage, in which institution he was deeply interested. This gift enabled me to complete the third story of the house, which had hitherto remained in an unfinished state. At a subsequent date the orphanage was considerably enlarged and improved, and a range of suitable office houses erected. The front of the house has a stone with the suitable inscription 'Ebenezer,' for truly the 'Lord hath helped us.'

I also occasionally visited London, with some provincial towns, and met with more or less success, the amounts raised varying considerably from time to time. This last financial year the total received from England amounted to £300 15s. 6d.

The period of which I am now writing, from 1865 to 1868 inclusive, was one of great alarm and terror over the South and West of Ireland. I refer to the Fenian movement, and the attempts made for insurrection and revolution. The great American civil war had caused much excitement among the lower classes. Emissaries from America, both North and South, worked on the people to enlist, with promises that, in the event of victory, material assistance would be given to the Irish in their attempts at national independence. The North had the best of it. The promises of their agents were profuse—present great pay and promotion in the army, with the prospect of a farm or estate as the case might be when the English

garrison would be expelled from Ireland, and that, too, in the near future. Accordingly large numbers of fine able-bodied young men went to swell the ranks of the Northern armies, of whom a large proportion laid their bones on bloody battle-fields where Grant and Lee led the opposing forces.

The American civil war came to an end in April, 1865, and the Irish regiments with the others were disbanded. Hundreds of officers and men having got a taste and training for war came back to Ireland anxious to raise the standard of revolt. Arms were daily imported and freely distributed. A Ballina merchant told me that the quantity of steel for pike-heads being sold was enormous. The peasantry and artizans were nightly drilled by the returned American soldiers. The alarm and apprehension of a rising became prevalent, mingled with fears of a general massacre and rapine of the loyal and Protestant people. Several leaders of the conspiracy went through the disaffected districts reviewing their forces and rousing them to action. Isolated as were the Protestants of Connaught, and scanty in numbers, it was no wonder that they lived in constant dread of their lives. In March, 1868, the rising actually took place, but it proved an utter failure. The severity of the weather decimated the ranks of those who had taken the field, and the military in imposing strength carried all before them. Some police barracks were captured and the arms seized, but this was a small result, and in a short time the whole affair collapsed ingloriously. As part of the Fenian plan of operations was to attack the police barracks I was placed in trying if not perilous circumstances. My house, with church, school, and orphanage was situated on one side of the street just opposite the barracks. The authorities got information by spies or informers that these premises would be occupied in force, and made the principal point of attack. They took precautionary measures to prevent this being done. There was one week in which they expected that on some night the assault would be made, and I was told of the expected event. It was not very pleasant or cheering on retiring to

bed to think that I might be aroused by the shock of battle all around, and even in my own house. But the danger passed away without any violence. The collapse of the affair in other quarters caused the local parties to abandon all attempt at revolt, and the town and neighbourhood gradually assumed their customary peaceful quietude. While it lasted there was much uneasiness, and many made active preparations for self-defence. I made none whatever, considering that my safety lay in my utter helplessness.

During the proceedings almost every day was marked by the arrest of some returned American, or of local parties who were to figure as colonels or generals or other high officials. Several whom I knew very well came thus to grief, and under the Coercion Act then in force were seized, and without trial of any kind sent off to prison. Others made their escape in various disguises, about which they told after their return some years subsequently, when they had resumed their proper and more peaceful avocations which they had so rashly, abandoned for a very hazardous and dangerous enterprise.

May such fearful times never occur again in our land. The Lord avert them !

CHAPTER XXXV

MY attention has been called by some friends to certain omissions I have inadvertently made in my narrative. I hasten to supply some of these.

First in order, I omitted in my account of Collooney to narrate that the Rev. John Wilson was succeeded by the Rev. Hans M'C. Douglas, afterwards and at present minister of Woodburn, Carrickfergus. At my request Mr. Douglas has kindly supplied me with a statement, which I now give almost in his own words. He was appointed by the Board of Missions to take charge of Collooney in 1861, and laboured there till the summer of 1862, extending over one year and four months. Besides the regular service in Collooney he had also a bi-monthly meeting, three miles distant, at Oldstone, a ravine of the Sligo mountains, where the attendance was large and encouraging, composed mostly of the Irish teachers. They were most anxious to learn God's way of salvation. 'Indeed,' he says, 'I never could doubt the work which God did there. The very reminiscence of that hallowed spot in that deep and lonely glen will be sweet and refreshing to my soul while life lasts, and I doubt not will comfort and bless me in eternity.' He narrates an incident which occurred one Lord's day on his way to meeting. 'I met about 150 young men playing football on the road. I had heard of the danger of interfering with the Irishman's belief and manner of life, but I stood in their midst, and they stood reverentially around me, as if I were their priest. I charged them with breaking the fourth commandment, and said it was the whole of the Sabbath day God required of man, and not a portion of it.

I warned them to flee to Jesus, the only Saviour, and having commended them to Him passed on. Of course I expected a hot rejoinder, but not a word was uttered, not a dissenting voice was heard.' From this event he infers that there need be no fear of proclaiming the Gospel in any part of Connaught, and urges our ministers to do so. I am not so sure now this would be always practicable. A great change has come over the spirit and manners of the people within the last thirty years. Politics and party feelings have operated injuriously. The systematic desecration of the Sabbath by football games organized by the Clan-na-Gael and similar societies is so conducted that it would be hazardous to interfere with them. If any think otherwise let them try the experiment. The Presbyterian element was very small, but firmly attached to its parent stock and New Testament mode of worshipping God. But he was principally engaged among the Irish, believing that it was to them he was sent; he entered their cabins as freely as in peaceable Ulster. The people received him with the Irish 'cead mille failte,' a hundred thousand welcomes. He says, 'I refrained not my speech when necessary even on Rome's heresies. I used no weapon save the Bible; I needed no other, and always got a hearing. Every visit was closed with prayer, which was never refused. On this rugged and barren field what a pleasure to plough and sow the seed of the kingdom! Doubtless it will return one day in sheaves abundant.'

Mr. Douglas tells of an old resident of the place who stated that he had once lived with a minister, and on being asked what he thought of his doctrine, replied that he thought well of it. To discover if any of the seed sown had taken root, it was inquired if he recollected any of it. The man, without hesitation, said, 'Yes; He died, the just for the unjust, that we might be saved,' and added, 'I believe it, and will never forget it.' 'This,' writes Mr. Douglas, 'may appear trifling to a bystander, but it was of infinite moment to him and myself. A stone dropped into the ocean, it is said, in its vibrations touches the extremities of our globe, and shall God's Word return

to Him void? No; it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereunto He sends it.'

Again, 'An Irish teacher often came and heard me preach, standing on the stairs. We frequently conversed freely. I committed him to the Lord, and left with him "James's Inquirer," exhorting him to trust only in the Son of God, the Saviour alone of sinners. I shared alike the company of Episcopalians and Methodists in common with my own people, but with none of them was I half so happy as with my dear Irish brothers and sisters.'

Mr. Douglas removed from Collooney first to Tullamore, in King's County, for a short time, of which he gives an interesting account, but as this is out of the sphere of my Connaught life I must forbear referring to it more particularly. He ultimately settled in Woodburn, Carrickfergus.

On looking back at what I have written, among many omissions by oversight I find there are several noteworthy persons to whom I should have referred at an earlier period. I shall now endeavour to do them some small measure of justice. 'Honour to whom honour is due.'

The first, in order of time, was the Rev. Malcolm M'Gregor, a licentiate of the Free Church of Scotland. His name sufficiently indicates the race from which he sprang. A Highlander by birth, he received his collegiate training in Edinburgh, and was connected, I believe, with the congregation of Free St. Luke's, under the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Moody Stuart. This well-known minister had visited Connaught in company with the Rev. William Arnot, then of Glasgow, and both took a lively interest in our mission work. As one expression of it, Mr. M'Gregor was sent as missionary to Fortfield. He was supported in Connaught by the Free Synod of Aberdeen, and was ordained by the Presbytery of Aberdeen in December, 1851, as missionary in the Fortfield district. His arrival in the West took place at a time of no small excitement. It was just after the assault by a priest on Dr. Dill which I have before alluded to. He was present in Killala during the proceedings at Petty Sessions when the priest

was sent for trial to a higher tribunal. The demeanour of priests and people was novel in the experience of our young Scottish friend, and the stirring events going on were well fitted to excite amazement, if not alarm.

Fortfield is a small hamlet about two miles from Crossmolina, and five from Ballina. There being several Protestant families in the neighbourhood, it was a suitable centre for missionary operations. The commencement was made by the Rev. Mr. Brannigan, who opened a school there. It was afterwards under the superintendence of the Rev. H. Magee, who also opened a preaching station once a fortnight, and with such success that it was found necessary to have a regular Sabbath service conducted by a resident minister. Hence Mr. M'Gregor's appointment, who preached every Sabbath in the schoolhouse. He was not long in attracting the attention of all classes as a kind Christian man. He possessed considerable missionary energy, and founded two additional schools. He preached with much success to a pretty large congregation, which was mainly composed of Roman Catholics. He contributed a number of papers in the local press on controversial subjects, which were possessed of great ability and literary merit, and characterized by absolute freedom from all bitterness. His own gentle spirit breathed throughout; his motto seemed to be, 'Speaking the truth in love.' One of the subjects was a reply to the question often put by Roman Catholics to Protestants: 'Where was your Church before Luther?' The answer was twofold—first, as to the *doctrines*; second, as to the *members* of the Church. The former he conclusively proved were in the Bible. For the latter he referred to the Waldenses and others who, in the darkest ages, 'held the truth most pure of old when all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones.'

After a pastorate of more than three years he returned to his native land, partly owing to failing health, deeply regretted by his charge of scholars and hearers, as well as by myself and his brethren of the Presbytery. He was called to the Free Church congregation of Gartley, near Huntley, in Aberdeenshire, where, after a ministry of some

years, he departed this life. One who knew him well in Connaught writes : ' I never knew a more godly or spiritually-minded man, and that was the character he bore till the day of his death.' This statement I fully endorse.

After Mr. M'Gregor's departure the mission station was given to Mr. James Moir Porteous, also connected with the Free Church. His stay was for about two years. He was subsequently minister of the Cowgate congregation in Edinburgh, and was the author of several works. He received the honorary degree of D.D.

When Mr. Porteous removed to Scotland he and his wife were accompanied by a servant-girl who was of Roman Catholic parentage, and had come under the influence of the truth by the teaching of the mission school and the preaching of Mr. Porteous. The relatives, who, I believe, had been willing enough for her to go to Scotland, were stimulated by the priests and others to claim the girl, and insisted on her return home. This she was unwilling to do, and matters went so far that a process of law was instituted against her employers for exercising undue influence over one of such a tender age, and for forcible detention. They all returned to Ireland, and the case was tried before the Judge of Assize in Castlebar. There was some strong swearing on the part of the prosecution. The girl herself was examined, and said that her choice was purely voluntary. She refused to leave her employers to return home, as her religious convictions would be interfered with and herself subjected to annoyance and persecution. However, the jury hesitated, as I had anticipated, the majority being Roman Catholics; until, by pressure of the Judge, they came to a verdict for the defendant. The defence was ably conducted by George Orme Malley, Q.C., an Episcopalian, and one who has always in Connaught and in the capital manifested a lively interest in the Presbyterian cause. His services had been retained by Mr. Allen, but he returned the fee, giving it as a subscription to the Ballina Orphanage.

The next minister who took charge of the Fortfield mission station was the Rev. Robert M'Clelland, of Keady,

Co. Armagh. He had been a schoolfellow of mine under the teaching of the Rev. John Bleckley, of Monaghan, and also a companion at the Belfast College. He was a good classical scholar, and possessed of fine literary tastes and capabilities. His sermons were carefully composed, and displayed much ability, but in the delivery not marked by that force and fire which take with an Irish audience. He had after license been ordained as minister of a congregation in the North of England, which charge he resigned for reasons which I do not remember, but as creditable to himself. One who knew him in Connaught writes : ' He was a man of uniform temper, exceedingly mild, a truly Christian character, very conservative, but not aggressive.' Owing to the change of ministers and other causes the congregation began to fall away in Mr. M'Clelland's time, and he left, after a charge of nearly three years, in December, 1858. He has since died, but I cannot fix the date.

The Fortfield station being now without a resident pastor, the ministers of Ballina and Killala took it in charge. The school, which had fallen away, was once more revived. I continued to visit the school and preach regularly on the Sabbath till my appointment as Superintendent of the Connaught Schools and Orphanage.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ANOTHER of the worthies whom I desire to mention in connection with the Connaught mission work is Mr. Robert Johnston. He came to this country with the Rev. Malcolm M'Gregor, and acted as Scripture-reader, or, as they term it in Scotland, catechist. His sphere of labour was in the district of Mullaferry, Killala. He was also sent over, I believe, by one of the Edinburgh Free Church congregations, St. Luke's, whose minister was the Rev. Moody Stuart, and who, from his visit to the country, had been specially interested in the locality. I think one of the persons who took note of Mr. Johnston was the then Duchess-Dowager of Gordon, who identified herself with all kinds of Christian work. A friend who knew him informs me that he was early left an orphan, and was brought up by a pious grandmother. According to his own account he was wild and wayward, and when on a Sabbath day bird-nesting with some other bad boys he fell from a tree, and was so injured that he was lame ever after. While laid up with his broken limb a good lady, in whose visiting district his grandmother resided, was the means of his conversion. He devoted himself to work for the Master, and was so engaged for a time in Edinburgh, and subsequently in Killala district, where he was employed visiting the people—Protestant and Roman Catholic—in their homes, and looking after the schools under the superintendence of the Rev. H. Magee. He discharged his duties with Christian and conscientious fidelity. He was a very good and earnest man, with a rather peculiar manner. He was highly esteemed by the

people among whom he lived and laboured. After a comparatively short service he died of brain fever.

Another of my friends and fellow-labourers was the Rev. Joseph Donaldson. He received his education in the same school as myself, taught by the Rev. John Bleckley, of Monaghan. After being for some time at business he desired to devote himself to the ministry of the Gospel, and returned to the school in Monaghan to receive the preparatory education for entering college. The undergraduate course was gone through in Glasgow University, and the theological in the Edinburgh Free Church College. Having been licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Ballybay, he was invited by Mr. Allen to take part in the Connaught Mission, and I was delighted to welcome him as an old friend, knowing, as I did, his upright and Christian character.

The district allocated to Mr. Donaldson was Foxford. This is a small town about seven miles south of Ballina, and is situated on the frontier of an extensive region of stony, moorish, and dreary hills, and intervening plots of a similar kind. From the quantity of boulders strewn about it gets the name of 'Stony' Foxford. At one time Foxford was a place of some importance. It figured transiently in the disturbances of 1798, and because of its strategic position a military barracks was erected, and occupied by troops for a number of years.

The river Moy runs past the town, over its rocky channel, on its way northward to Ballina and the sea ; and there was once a salmon-weir at this place ; the linen trade also flourished ; but these are now things of the past.

The educational and religious condition of the region corresponded with its physical. The barony of Gallen, in which Foxford is located, possesses some tolerably good arable land, but over by far the larger part of its extent it is either wild mountain, or almost equally wild morass, with rocky and irreclaimable wastes. By the census preceding the period of which I write it had a population of some 47,000 ; of these only 4,683 could read and write. The Protestants numbered only 300. In one parish there

were eight Protestants to 3,700 Roman Catholics. In the entire region the Presbyterian families could be counted on the fingers of one hand. This was the field into which Mr. Donaldson was sent to cultivate. It was truly sowing the seed in 'stony places.'

Mr. Donaldson started three schools in the district, and these were largely attended for a time. A great attraction was the distribution of food supplied by the Government and some benevolent societies in Britain, and this was done without any religious distinction. The children made good progress, but were very ignorant and backward, and they had need to be taught the very simplest elements of knowledge—both Scriptural and secular. Mr. Donaldson wrote : 'The Irish schools, which had been so effective elsewhere, were never introduced here. The ordinary week-day schools were thinly scattered over the country and very inefficient. There were only a few Protestants, and these had generally sunk into apathy and carelessness ; in fact, the ignorance of the great body of the people in religious matters was very great. The usual opposition by the priests to Scriptural education was very fierce and prolonged.

Concurrently with the work of the schools a Sabbath service was maintained in the court-house. There had been an opening for this previously. The Episcopal incumbent was an absentee, and his curate, for reasons unnecessary to mention, had become so obnoxious to his hearers that they left in a body. Application was made to the Presbyterians to minister to them, and in the peculiar circumstances of the case this was done to a certain extent. I occasionally drove over in the interval between my own meetings, and others gave help. There was a fair attendance of people, who manifested a great desire to have the pure Gospel preached to them. Mr. Donaldson regularly ministered to them with much acceptance. After a time a new clergyman was appointed to the parish. He was a Christian and a gentleman. In consequence the Episcopalians naturally returned to their own Church. On consultation we agreed that our work in that region was

done ; the schools had fallen off in attendance, and there really seemed no place for us. Accordingly the new rector was informed of our purpose, and he took up, so far as possible, the work we had commenced. Mr. Donaldson left, and was installed in the congregation of Fermoy, Co. Cork, in April, 1854. Here he laboured with fidelity and zeal, respected by all classes till his death in December, 1880. He was a man of much practical sagacity. I was indebted to him for many useful hints during the erection of the Ballina church, manse, and school.

The Rev. David Ferguson was another of my friends and fellow-labourers. He was a native of Co. Tyrone, born near Cookstown, and brought up in Ballygoney congregation, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Heron. I had known him at college as a good scholar. He took the first prize in the mathematical class. He was induced by Mr. Allen to engage in the Connaught Mission. His location was Bealderig, where he arrived in the autumn of 1848. This is a coastguard station, about seven miles north of Ballycastle, on the coast of the barony of Erris. The shores along this coast are, from the difficulty of access, but little known, although they are fully equal in wildness and magnificence to any along the whole range of our sea-girt isle. The road from Ballycastle discloses mountain and ocean scenery of a grand and picturesque character. Thence westwards to Belmullet the road traverses vast stretches of dreary moorland, interspersed at distant intervals with some green spots of arable land. At Bealderig there is a cove or little natural harbour affording berths for boats, but open to the north, subject to a heavy ground swell, and like most openings on the coast of Mayo giving little shelter to any kind of craft.

In this wild and secluded place Mr. Ferguson and his wife laboured with marvellous assiduity, and in a spirit of cheerful contentment, both teaching throughout the week, and he preaching on the Sabbath. Their dwelling was a poor cabin with earthen walls and floor, and a thatched roof often pervious to the weather. Of the two apartments the cottage contained, one was occupied as a school and

preaching-place, the other as their own residence. I have assisted with some Scottish ministers in the examination of the scholars, some sixty in number, who were more than half naked, but displayed much intelligence. They occupied a tier of benches that towered up to the rafters. Considering the antecedents of the children the amount of their knowledge—Scriptural and secular—was wonderful, and creditable to Mr. Ferguson's patience, industry, and ability as teacher.

At this period an effort had been made to benefit the poor fishermen along the coast. Mr. Brannigan, on a visit to Scotland, pleading the cause of the mission, had referred to their condition in his speeches. The seas were teeming with every kind of fish, but there were not the appliances necessary to catch them. It was proposed that funds should be raised for providing boats. This idea was well responded to, and the ladies of Ireland and Scotland signalized themselves and their respective associations by sending *The Charlotte Square*, *The Maiden City*, *Bon Accord of Aberdeen*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, etc., these names indicating the localities where the money that procured the boats was collected. The boat scheme proved to be an admirable expedient of Christian philanthropy. Very many who else had died or become inmates of the workhouse were enabled to earn a comfortable subsistence. It was remarkable that the success of these boats was proverbially greater than that of those belonging to the Romanist party, notwithstanding that the priest had from the altar anathematized these heretical boats, whilst he formally blessed those of the faithful and sprinkled them with holy water. At Bealderig the boat was *The Fair Maid of Perth*, and had, when I was there, a good fishing, whilst, to the consternation of the priest and his partisans, the others had caught nothing. The fish captured were divided into as many shares as there were men in the boat, and one share more which accrued to the school with which that boat was connected. It were desirable that the Government or private enterprise should adopt vigorous measures on a great scale for

the development of the Irish fisheries for the employment of the people, and as an important source of national wealth.

The good work at Bealderig, educational and religious, encountered fierce and formidable opposition. The priest took a house next door to the school, and would walk up and down with a large whip to terrify the children. Mr. Ferguson had often to escort them past him. Many striking proofs were given to scholars and adult friends of sacerdotal tyranny. Threats of serious violence were made, so that on one occasion the police had to occupy the school-house all night. At another time information was given that the house was to be attacked that night. The coastguards turned out and fired some shots to let it be known they were prepared. Mrs. Ferguson writes: 'We barriaded the house as well as we could, then committed ourselves into the care of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps, and who has promised to be a present help in time of need, retired to rest, feeling assured He would take care of us, and we awoke in safety next morning.'

Among other unseemly doings, the priests entered the house of an Irish teacher, and seizing five copies of the Holy Scriptures committed them to the flames, and they were burned to ashes. He flung one of the books at the teacher's son, and threatened he would get men to pull down the house over their heads. The lad swore informations before a magistrate to the above effect, and the case came up at Petty Sessions, but in the interim the boy was tampered with, and on oath contradicted what he had previously sworn. Informations were granted against him for perjury, and the case against the priest was dismissed. Despite all these troubles the labour was not in vain. In after years our good friends who had endured such hardships got tidings that the good seed that had been sown brought forth abundantly, and that many of the young people who went away remained staunch Presbyterians and consistent Christians.

Mr. Ferguson, after a stay of about five years, received a call to Portlaw, Co. Waterford, where he was ordained in

April, 1854, and continued its pastor till his death in February, 1887.

I now bring my narrative to a conclusion. Several matters have been omitted, partly for prudential reasons. It terminates at the time of my appointment as Superintendent of the Connaught Schools and Orphanage, so that the quarter of century since has been entirely unnoticed in which events worthy of note as regards myself and my work have occurred. Several friends have asked me to publish in a separate form what I have already written. I may do this, and if so the matter will be considerably enlarged by the publication of what I have left out, and by bringing the narrative down to a date nearer to the present.

END OF PART I



REV. THOMAS ARMSTRONG.

[To face page 207.]

PREFACE TO PART II

I N publishing these reminiscences of Mr. Armstrong, 'My Life in Connaught,' which were originally written for the *Missionary Herald*, and cover only the early part of his ministry in the West of Ireland, a period of twenty-two years, while it is not in my power to add to them much that would be interesting, I think they would be incomplete without some reference to the twenty-eight years subsequently spent in what might be considered more strictly mission work. Of his former work I knew something, but I was so intimately associated with the latter that in every respect I write that I do know.

It was my dear husband's intention to occupy some of the time of his rest and retirement in writing a fuller and enlarged account of his life in Connaught, which covered a period of fifty years, but God, having called His servant to his *eternal* rest before his purpose was accomplished, the duty of carrying out his desire has been so impressed upon the heart of one who, during these twenty-eight years, with many short-comings, endeavoured to assist him in his work, that, with much trepidation, she humbly attempts what must be a very imperfect account of the life and labours of one of the most devoted and successful missionaries of the West of Ireland.

In reading that part of his life which was written by himself, anyone may notice how little prominence he gives *self*, how little credit he assumes ; this was truly characteristic.

His fellow-townsmen ever recognised in him a man to

be relied upon, a man interested in the prosperity of the place and people among whom he dwelt. *Their* well-being and advancement were *his*. In every social improvement he ever took a leading part. The lighting of the town, the sanitary arrangements, the introduction of water, any movement for the general good had at all times his keen interest and energetic endeavours to accomplish.

As a minister he was an intellectual and successful preacher ; his people loved and trusted him. Those who were then the children of his congregation to this day remember his regular and kindly catechetical instruction and periodical visitations. His wise counsel was sought by many both within and without his own church. His business habits were known and appreciated, while his kindly manner, ready wit and humour made him a general favourite with all creeds and classes.

Generous almost to a fault, humble and sympathetic with the poor, yet ever able to hold his own, and take his place among those who at the time he went to the West, were too much disposed to look down on Presbyterianism, of which they knew little, but which in later years they learned to respect.

In every way Mr. Armstrong was well fitted for the arduous work laid upon him by the General Assembly in 1887. Reluctant as he was to give up his church, he heard and obeyed the call to superintend the Connaught Mission. He was satisfied, too, that he could dwell among his own people, and with his usual energy he commenced his new work. He has gone to his reward, and the great day alone shall declare the good done by the Connaught Schools and Orphanage.

JANE F. ARMSTRONG.

CHAPTER I

‘Dense are the clouds that veil the face of Heaven,
Deep is the gloom that darkens air and sky . . .
Sad is the soul, by gloom of spirit clouded,
Heavy the heart oppressed by earthly care ;
And the mind’s clearer vision over shrouded,
Sees only storm and tempest everywhere.
And owns with doubts, fears, faintings, tremblings, crowded
Strength but to question—Life but to despair.’

A. A. WATTS.

‘Beware—O erring human heart—
What thoughts thou lodgest there.’

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

MR. ALLEN, who had been appointed by the General Assembly in 1848 to superintend and extend the then existing Irish schools in the West of Ireland, died in 1865. For about three years previous to his death Mr. Armstrong had been assisting him to collect the funds for this mission, as Mr. Allen’s health was such that he was unable to travel. In this way Mr. Armstrong gained a pretty good knowledge of the work he was in future to undertake. Some of these schools which had long been established were reorganized, and several new ones opened by the efforts of Rev. Dr. Edgar, of Belfast. A very flourishing one was conducted in a cosy little room over the vestibule of the Mullaferry (Killala) church, which was under the care of the Rev. Hamilton Magee. This church is one of the oldest in the Presbytery, one of the five that were scattered over the province of Connaught. It was built in the plain barn style, and in the memory of some old people who worshipped in it had boasted neither of boarded floor

nor pews—planks supported at the ends by turf or stones serving for seats !

Then came, as a great improvement, pews with such high backs that no child could be seen, and only the heads of grown-up people when one entered the church. Here the Rev. David Rodgers ministered for many years—kind, generous, and beloved, his memory is even yet green in the hearts of the few who remember him. The Rev. Hamilton Magee was ordained as minister of Killala in August, 1849. Before the end of the month cholera was raging all around ; whole families were swept away. Many who survived the famine of 1847 succumbed to this fearful disease. In the town of Killala, some three miles from the church, there was not a house in which there was not one dead ! The medical man was Dr. Charles Neilson. He was an eminent physician, kind, benevolent, and skilful. His own family did not escape ; two sisters were stricken down. With one the disease ran a rapid course, and in a few hours she expired in great agony. The other recovered, and became an active worker in the Connaught Mission-field, and many years afterwards mother-in-law of the Rev. Thomas Armstrong. During this time of fear and distress Mr. Magee acted with true missionary zeal, visiting the sick, and showing no fear through all the trying time. For the accommodation of the poor a house was rented, and fitted up with beds, outside the town. Dr. Neilson had charge of this temporary hospital, and for several weeks never rested otherwise than reclining in an armchair, ever ready at a moment's call. Public funerals were few, fear and distress reigned on all sides.

It was closely following this time that the Killala Mission School was opened. It was held in a house given by Dr. Neilson. The teacher lived on the premises, and conducted a night-school for grown-up young men and women. Many were here prepared for life's battle, learning not only to read and write, but gaining that knowledge which makes wise unto salvation. Temperance principles and practices were instilled ; and a large number of children collected after school hours were taught to sing the sweet songs of Zion by Mrs. Reid, Dr. Neilson's sister. When walking through the town it was pleasant to hear these young

people as they plied their needles skilfully at their muslin embroidery, sitting on their door-steps singing of Jesus and His love. In this Killala school also commenced, under the guidance of her mother, the first missionary work among the little ones of one who afterwards became the wife of Rev. Thomas Armstrong, and spent many happy busy years in assisting her husband to manage the Ballina Orphanage. This institution was also an outcome of the famine and cholera years. Some time after Mr. Allen had come to Ballina two poor girls attending the mission school in Ballina, under Mr. Armstrong, were turned out one inclement night into the street by their friends, by order of the priest, because they persisted against rebuke and persecution in attending the mission-school and reading the Bible. Some had been forced to give up, but these continued firm. On finding they would not be received by any of their people Mr. Allen procured a lodging for them. He brought their case before a gentleman much interested in Ireland, Mr. J. Stewart, of Manchester, and shortly after a house was rented, where they and others who, though threatened, continued to attend the school were sheltered. At first the girls were kept at night only, and received their breakfast free, working in town for the remainder of their support, but this was not found very satisfactory. Much good learned in the 'Home' was done away with by daily contact with friends hostile to the teaching received. The Orphanage was then built, and a matron brought from the North of Ireland. About sixteen girls were here received. Funds were scarce, and during Mr. Allen's time the house was never finished. The top story was not much required, as the lower rooms were sufficient for the inmates. It was not till after Mr. Armstrong was appointed over the orphanage, when an increase of girls required more accommodation, that the stairs were properly made, and the upper rooms prepared as dormitories. Mr. Allen never issued a report. No one doubted that their donations were properly employed, yet it was satisfactory when the first report was published by Mr. Armstrong soon after his appointment as superintendent.

CHAPTER III

‘ Now what could artless Jeanie do
She had nae will to say him na ;
At length she blushed a sweet consent,
And love was aye between them twa.’

BURNS.

‘ And happy was the bride,
And glad the bridegroom’s heart,
For He who tarried at their side
Bade grief and ill depart.’

BAKER.

THE year 1868 was an eventful one to the new superintendent. He had lived a lonely life for ten years, accompanied in his daily walks by his two faithful dogs ; he now contemplated making a change in his social condition. The charge of the orphanage entailed not only an immense responsibility as regarded the funds, but a daily supervision, in which he felt he would require assistance. He, therefore, on May 19, in the old Killala church, entered a second time into the matrimonial state. It was rather a curious fact that he and his wife represented two opposite political parties. His father, a leading merchant in Monaghan, claimed to be descended from Oliver Cromwell, a daughter of whom had married a Captain Armstrong, who, espousing Cromwell’s cause, followed his fortunes from the Border-land, the country of the Armstrongs. His mother, Rosanna Anketell, was of Huguenot descent. His wife, by her mother’s side, was a lineal descendant of John Knox, the reformer, by his second wife, Margaret Stewart, cousin of Mary Queen of Scots,

and daughter of Lord Ochiltree, who was ninth in descent from Robert the Bruce of Scotland. Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of John Knox, was married to the Rev. John Welsh. The representatives of the family are still to be found in many places, especially in the counties of Down and Tyrone. Catherine, a daughter of the Rev. Andrew Welsh, minister of Ardstraw, Co. Tyrone, married the Rev. Moses Nelson, of Redamon, who was Mrs. Armstrong's great-grandfather. By the paternal side she was Scotch but, her father dying early, she grew up among her mother's relations, and was married from the house of her uncle, Dr. Neilson, of Killala.

Mr. Armstrong was the eldest of fourteen children, all of whom were living when he made the first break in the family by entering college at fourteen years of age. His health broke down, and he was obliged to rest for a year, which he spent with his grandfather Rodger Anketell, Esq. He was magistrate for Cos. Monaghan and Cavan. Of this relative he often spoke and remembered with much affection. It was his wish that his favourite grandson should go to Trinity College, Dublin, but this proposition was so strenuously opposed by his old minister that his father would not consent. He had taught in Mr. Bleckly's school for some time, and by his advice entered the Royal College, Belfast, in 1836. Here he studied under Drs. Cairns, Bruce, Cook, Young, and Stavely. He took his course of Divinity in Edinburgh under Dr. Chalmers, and his eminent colleagues in the Free Church College, came out with the Free Church at the disruption on November 5, 1844. He was licensed to preach in his native town Monaghan, and delivered his first sermon before his own friends in the church of his boyhood. He had always wished to become a minister. When ten years of age he gave the first shilling he possessed, and which he had earned by repeating the 119th Psalm, to the building fund of Mr. Bleckley's church; he was a generous giver, and his liberality increased with the means at his disposal.

CHAPTER IV

‘ With tearful eyes I look around,
Life seems a dark and stormy sea,
Yet midst the gloom I hear a sound,
A heavenly whisper—Come to me.
It tells me of a place of rest,
It tells me where my soul may flee,
Oh! to the weary, faint, opprest,
How sweet the bidding—Come to me !’

MR. ARMSTRONG sometimes spent two or three weeks at one of the watering-places near Ballina, where, accompanied by his wife and her mother, he could enjoy the fresh air, and carry on his correspondence with more leisure and quiet, for Ballina was a busy town between Sligo and Westport, and numerous travellers came and went during the summer months. On these occasions we frequently had clergymen and other friends staying with us who came to see the beauties of the West. My husband usually conducted a Sabbath evening service or week-night meeting in our lodgings while we remained. We generally had some little ones from the orphanage with us ; we took those by turns that most required change of air or sea bathing. Strange as it may appear, no jealousy was shown by those who were left behind, though all rejoiced who were chosen to accompany us. One year we went to Kilcumin, a place about fifteen miles from Ballina. On the north-west coast of Connaught lies Killala Bay ; one of its headlands is called Kilcumin. It has obtained some celebrity as being the landing-place of the French in 1798, under General Hubert, who with

about 1,000 men made a wild and fruitless effort to rouse the peasantry to rebellion. The French camp is still visible, with the traces on the soil where their tents were pitched. From Kilcumin the French army marched to Killala. Though the officers were said to be very polite the people hid, and fled terrified, and 1798 became an era in Irish history, and in the neighbourhood all important events were afterwards dated from the 'year the French landed.'

Near the French camp at Kilcumin are the ruins of a small chapel. The style of its architecture points to a very remote period. Probably 700 or 800 years have elapsed since its erection. In a rude burial-ground attached are the tombs of the De Burghes or Burke family, descendants of early English settlers. Large loose heaps of stones, with two long narrow slabs standing up, bearing no inscription, are believed to mark the spot where St. Kumin lies. Adjoining is a 'Holy Well,' surrounded by a wall, and covered over with a rude roof of large stones. The last Sabbath of July is observed in the South and West as a day of peculiar sanctity. It is known as 'Garland Sunday,' probably from the practice of laying chaplets or garlands of flowers on the graves of departed saints or friends. Some call it 'Garlic' Sunday, but this seems to be a corruption of 'garland.' In Irish it is 'Douagh Chulumb Dhu,' The Sunday of the Black Dove, the meaning of which the writer has not been able to discover. The day is, at any rate, largely devoted to religious purposes. It is looked forward to with considerable interest for a long time beforehand. A number of what are called 'holy wells' exist in Ireland. They are believed to be the burial places of saints, and are resorted to on Garland Sunday, where a religious service or 'Patthrn' in honour of the patron saint of the locality is observed. The day is divided between devotions in the morning and drinking in the evening; in both respects a very sad spectacle is presented. First of all the head is uncovered and the feet made bare, then reverence is made to the *holy well*, and prayer is offered, after which, in a kind of procession, the crowd go in apparently endless succession round the well and

the heaps of stones. Beads are told and prayers repeated while young and old, men and women, go round and round. After a certain number of prayers and circuits they pass into the burial-ground, where a similar ceremony is performed about the grave of Kumin. Returning to the well a rag is deposited on its covering, and sometimes a little earth taken from the grave and carried away as a specific for certain diseases.

Devotions ended, the amusements begin. On the summit of an adjoining hill tents are erected, to which the people crowd for drinking intoxicating liquors, of which large quantities are sold. Music is also here, to the sound of which many join in the dance, gay songs are sung, and all is mirth and jollity. As the evening advances the effects of drink are very visible; fights and quarrels usually wind up the day. In olden times there was often bloodshed and even loss of life, but the presence of the constabulary has now a quieting effect. What a sad and distressing spectacle under the name of religion! We should be deeply thankful that, taught by God's word and spirit, we turn away from such wretched performances, and look not to holy wells but to the fountain of a Saviour's Blood for cleansing, from penances and suffering to the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this locality one of the Connaught Mission Schools has long been maintained, and the school-house used as a preaching station connected with the church in Ballinglen.

CHAPTER V

‘Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O sea !
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.’

TENNYSON.

PART of the work connected with Mr. Armstrong's new appointment was to visit occasionally the mission schools scattered over the West of Ireland. Some were in very remote districts. One was in Erris, and was known by the name Straghataggle. Truly this school was a light shining in a dark place, owing to the fact that the National Board would not countenance a school in such an inaccessible place. Its educational work cannot be too highly estimated. Many young people who are now rejoicing in light and life but for this tiny lamp would still have been sitting amid the gloom of spiritual night. The district for over thirty miles is quite flat, no trees vary the monotony of the landscape, nothing is to be seen but heather ! In the mission school here a female teacher lived a quiet useful life. The inhabitants are rich to a certain extent, possessing a number of cattle, but few crops are raised, except the patch of potatoes required for the families of the small cabins which shelter the owners of the cattle that browse among the heather, and pay the ‘rint,’ or the stony ‘gardens’ where mixed crops of oats and barley flourish for the purpose of making the illicit spirit called ‘poteen.’

There may be some improvement within the last few years, but at the time of which I write the custom was for

a bride to get a pair of shoes, and a fine blue cloth cloak with hood, at the time of her marriage, which served her during the remainder of her life. When she went to market with her butter and eggs, or the hidden bottle of poteen, she carefully tied up her shoes in a handkerchief, and carried them in her basket, folded her long cloak over her shoulders, and started off over the bog! Tea was a luxury seldom indulged in, except at weddings or wakes, more frequently the latter. The teacher of this school was a native of the soil; her father was a well-to-do grazier, rich in his way. She used to come to Ballina once or twice a year for household stores, not caring to live on potatoes and milk like most of her neighbours. I recall to this day my surprise when she came one day to Mr. Armstrong to get prizes for her scholars. I asked her what kind of books she thought would suit them. 'Books!' she said, 'what would they do with books? I want Mr. Armstrong to give me what will enable me to have a good tea-party! I will make some fine big soda-cakes, and invite all my scholars to tea, then, when they are going away, whoever deserves a prize for good answering or attendance will get a good spoonful of tea or sugar; they will value these more than books.' I found these scholars were not all children, but young men and women—quiet simple people, who gathered day by day, and often night by night, to hear of Jesus and His love, and learn under great difficulties to spell out the old, old story in the New Testament.

On one occasion a party of clergymen with some lady friends took an excursion into this region. We provided ourselves with dinner for three days, which we spread out and enjoyed sitting on the grass. Each night we had our tea, and rested at the house of a friend, or put up at some hotel. The first day we visited Down Patrick Head. This remarkable headland terminates a narrow peninsula about a mile long, 'and breaks sheer down in a mural precipice 300 feet.' A natural tunnel about 100 feet high perforates the headland for a quarter of a mile. The thunder of the breakers as they rush in from the ocean can be heard a long distance. On this evening we enjoyed

the hospitality of the Rev. Michael Brannigan, and after a sumptuous tea divided our party between the comforts of the manse and the nearest hotel. Many a cheerful party assembled in this Connaught manse as well as in others within the bounds of the Presbytery. I was frequently one of the number. Nowhere have I seen so much unity and unselfish brotherly kindness, combined with simple-minded cheerfulness and humour, as existed among the ministers and families of the Connaught manses, leaving precious memories which time cannot efface.

Our second night found us in Belmullet after a long fatiguing day. Our drive was over a very uninteresting flat country, but the road was pretty good, and our party in high spirits, the day fine and the air pure and fresh; all combined to remind us that it was approaching the hour of our midday repast. The gentlemen first wished to visit the school, at which they arrived by a succession of leaps over bog-holes, and careful stepping on precarious heathery footing, for about two miles off the main road, where the ladies of the party, finding a little oasis, rested, and laying out their picnic awaited the return of the clergymen. In their absence the lady of the soil, a friend of our teacher, came out to give us a 'cead Mile Failte' to Erris, and under a snow-white home-made linen cloth she carried something in a jug, with a nice china cup in her other hand. We were feeling rather exhausted with our long drive, and Mrs. B. came to us like a good Samaritan with balm and blessing. She poured out her cordial, and handed it round; it was reviving and refreshing, and looked like boiled milk, though flavoured more with peat smoke than to our town tastes was quite agreeable. However, we swallowed our portion, for to refuse Irish hospitality is a crime unpardonable. Mrs. B. then invited us all to spend the night at her house. 'But,' I said, 'you would not have beds for us all.' 'Beds!' she replied, 'beds would be no newance to ye—plenty of dry rushes and good clean coverings I can give, and a hearty welcome.' No doubt to many a weary traveller the proposal would have been inviting, but we did not see our way to accept the very kind

invitation, so Mrs. B. turned away rather disappointed after cordially offering us some more of her brewing. We asked her how she made it, and she told us, adding *sotto voce*, 'The last thing I put in is a good glass of poteen ! This gave it the smoky flavour ! Tell it not in Gath !' Here were we, a party of lady teetotalers actually drinking poteen ! I never tasted it before or since. I do not think it had any injurious effect at the time, and it certainly did not foster a taste for the liquor.

CHAPTER VI

‘ See . . . mad ambition’s gory hand
Sending like bloodhounds from the slip—
Woe, want, and murder o’er the land !
Even in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale.’

BURNS.

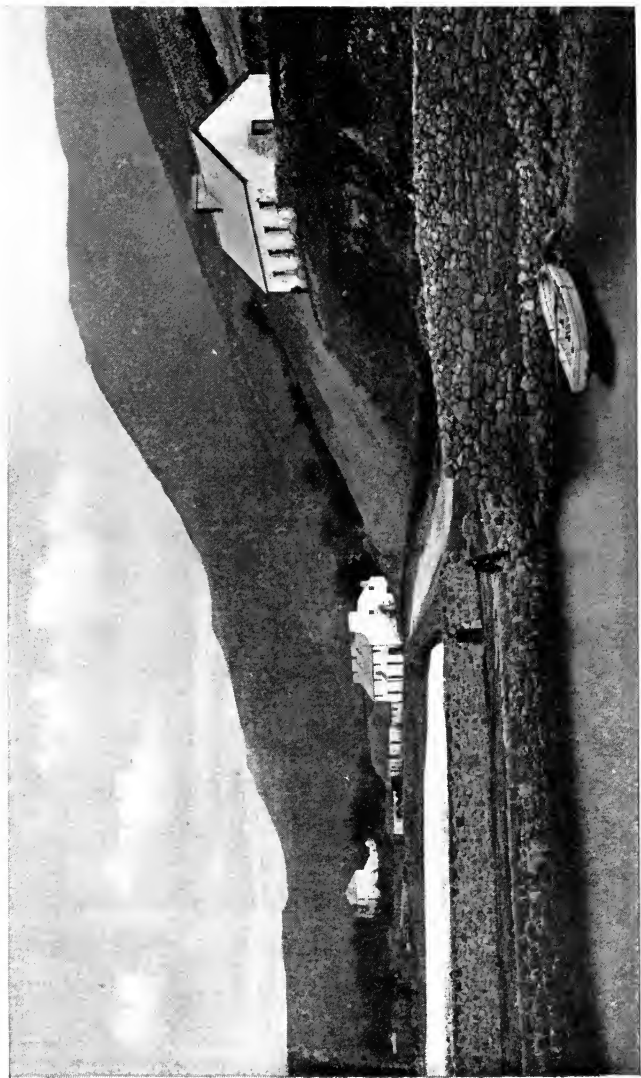
‘ Not in rich furniture or fine array . . .
But, by the way of nourishment and strength
Thou creep’st into my breast,
Making Thy way my rest.’

G. HERBERT.

A SMALL school was situated in Connemara surrounded by the most beautiful scenery, and the most dense ignorance. The teacher was a lady by birth and education, a widow with limited means ; she was glad to accept the small salary of a mission teacher, feeling she could lead a useful life. On one occasion when we visited her school we found her ill, and in bed. She was quite alone, and said when it became dark she lay in terror watching the rats ! So numerous were they that they ate up everything they could reach, and even climbed up the walls of her cottage in search of food. This lady had to send seven miles to the nearest village for everything she required. The people in the neighbourhood kept a large number of goats, but few cows. Some kind-hearted neighbour often sent her a little milk for her tea, but as it was not considered ‘ lucky ’ to sell goat’s-milk she could not get a regular supply. This school was afterwards closed, as no teacher could be found to stay in the place.

Another school flourished in a village overlooking the

Killeries. I shall never forget my first visit to this picturesque little hotel, and the kindness we received from host and hostess. We arrived in the evening of a wet dreary day, after a long drive, thoroughly drenched. The mist was so dense that nothing could be seen but the road. When I awoke next morning the sky was perfectly clear. The sun shone as if a cloud had never veiled its brightness. The bay lay in glory and beauty surrounded by mountains of varied hue, according as the light fell upon them a perfect picture of tranquillity and rugged grandeur. Amongst the mountains in cultivated little holdings dwelt a number of Scotch families. The gentry who possessed shooting lodges generally engaged Scotchmen as gardeners, gamekeepers, etc. Not very far distant from this place rise the soaring acclivities of Benveny and Maamdarg Mountains, the frontier of the Joyce Country, and Connemara. Much might be said of the beauty and 'Alpine grandeur' of this sequestered spot. The climate, damp but mild, favours vegetation, and many flowering shrubs beautify the roads, forming hedges; the fuschia is conspicuous among them. Yet with all its natural attractions it was the scene of one of the most atrocious murders which ever blighted the face of Nature in one of those years of terrible crime and outrage in Ireland. On the morning after this tragedy the clergyman of Westport, my husband, and myself drove into the village of Leenane. The occasion of this visit was an arrangement to hold a communion service in the school-house for the benefit of the Scotch families, who for years had been deprived of the ordinance. The day was dull, but an outward calm reigned around, when the postman arrived, and brought the news of the massacre at Maamtrassna, where several families named Joyce resided, all in some way related to each other. Several were attacked and murdered, many believed by their own connections. The news was received in various ways—some were horror-stricken, some fainted from fear, while many heard of the event in an unconcerned manner considering it quite a natural procedure, which manifested very plainly the spirit of outrage which spread desolation,



LEENANE SCHOOLHOUSE.

[To face page 224.

distress, and danger over that otherwise peaceful locality, and reached far and wide, till the name of Ireland became a reproach to the British nation. The Maamtrassna massacre cast a deep gloom over the Scotch settlers. Isolated as they were, no one could surmise who might be the next victim ! But the Sabbath morning rose clear and bright, and early from their mountain homes came the members of our little congregation, some in boats across the bay, some climbing over the rugged hills. About a dozen communicants sat down at the Lord's table that Sabbath morning under most peculiar circumstances. The plain little room, the simple table spread, round which sat a few, who in the struggle which raged, and in their isolated condition, separated from friends and the ordinary means of grace, had remained faithful to their Lord and Master. Solemnly they listened to the precious words of Jesus, and testified their faith in Him, then, joining in singing one of the old Psalms, which to the Scotch especially are so dear, they bowed their heads in prayer. Mr. Armstrong having concluded the service the little congregation prepared to separate. Each man took his revolver out of his pocket, examined it, and put it back again, remarking, ' We dare not venture without *these*. No man knows when he may be attacked.' They all shook hands with each other and with us, expressed their great pleasure and happiness in joining in the Communion Service, and went their several ways, not knowing who might reach his home in safety ! These were sad times ! Each morning the question was asked at post-offices, ' Who was shot last night ? Mr. Armstrong being a clergyman, and not possessing any landed property, was comparatively safe, but could not tell when he might be mistaken for some other person and shot at. The authorities were at their wit's end. No person knew who would be next attacked, or what means to adopt to bring about a better state of affairs. Mr. Armstrong had frequent communications on the subject. His wisdom and foresight were acknowledged and acted upon in many cases.

CHAPTER VII

‘ If happiness has not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest.

‘ Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang.
The heart aye’s the part aye
That makes us right or wrang.’

BURNS.

‘ A world of care without,
A world of strife shut out,
A world of love shut in.’—D. G.

I N the year 1873 Mr. Armstrong, with the consent of the Board of Missions, undertook along with his other work the charge of Dromore West. This mission station had been organized as a congregation by the Rev. M. Kerr in 1850, and was an important place between Sligo and Ballina. Here Mr. Armstrong ministered for three years to a small but respectable congregation. A large school prospered under the care of a son of one of the oldest and most godly workers connected at an early stage with the Irish mission. He and several sisters were brought up under the ministry of the Rev. Michael Brannigan, and all turned out good teachers. These three years spent in Dromore West sped quickly. The work certainly was heavy to both of us, but to those accustomed from childhood to the Bianconi cars a drive of fifteen miles in the morning, and the same in the evening, was not considered such an undertaking as it might be now when train

travelling is more general. There were three services each Sabbath day, and a morning Sabbath-school. The afternoon service was held in a school-house about four miles distant. Here Mr. Armstrong, accompanied by his wife as precentor, was driven by his faithful Scripture-reader, a wise and useful man, and one much beloved by all parties round us. There was a regular weekly prayer meeting, which was well attended, and a class for the instruction and practice of sacred music. During the winter interesting and instructive lectures were given almost every month. Several ministers of different denominations contributed to these enjoyable evenings. Mr. Armstrong delivered many himself, and gave the readings in some 'services of song,' the choir rendering the musical portions. A letter received from the neighbourhood a short time ago runs thus : 'I recall with pleasure the popular lectures given by Mr. Armstrong and others from time to time, when we were so taxed for seats we had to borrow from our neighbours ! How the people came on winter nights down from the mountains, and from distances of eight and ten miles all round ! The services of song were a new thing to us in Tireragh. How delighted we all were, and how we looked forward to each lecture with expectant pleasure ! Then our soirées—what great gatherings ! and how united we Protestants were under Canon Low and Mr. Armstrong ! Mr. Armstrong was the life and soul of our meetings. His preaching was something new. How I used to delight in his reading of the Scripture, and was always sorry when the chapter was finished. The poor will ever remember him with truest gratitude.'

The last happy year in Dromore West was clouded by the ill-health under which Mr. Armstrong almost entirely broke down. Often I watched him during the Sabbath service, expecting to see him fall every moment, his face perfectly colourless. Still he persevered, till total collapse for a time laid him low, and forced him to consult an eminent Dublin physician. By the blessing of God on the means used he recovered so far as to be able to continue his mission work, but the congregation he was reluctantly

obliged to resign, and after careful consideration he returned to Ballina in 1876. Before leaving Dromore a farewell soir  e was given by the congregation, and a handsome drawing-room clock was presented, with an affectionate, suitable address expressing much regret at our leaving. The inscription on the clock ran thus : 'Presented to Rev. Thomas and Mrs. Armstrong by members of various Christian churches at Dromore West as a mark of esteem, May, 1876.' The Evangelical Alliance met in Basle in the year 1879. Mr. Armstrong, who was a member of it, went with another gentleman from Ballina to attend the meetings in Basle. He had long wished to visit the Continent, but never thought of taking a trip to any place except business called him. The time seemed to have come at last, so he and his friend started off in good spirits. He writes from Constance : 'I met with the Free Church minister at Constance, a famous place connected with Huss. The hotel I stopped at was once his prison. I stood on the stone he stood on when condemned, was in the chamber where the council met, gathered beans from the spot on which he was burned ! sat in the chairs of Pope and Emperor, and saw other memorials of interest.' Again 'I fear I must abandon the idea of going to Rome because of the heat. It will be a great disappointment to me, yet I will put health and safety above all other considerations ; I will not overdo it. I must reserve news and notes of places till my return, and what I have seen will furnish matter for talk from time to time. . . . My one, and it is a very deep regret, is that I was not able to have *you* with me, but our mutual prayers always meet above.' The high spirits Mr. Armstrong usually possessed might lead one to think he had not so much sentiment as others of a less lively nature, but those who knew him best saw how full of loving sympathy was his heart. He generally managed to be at home on the anniversary of our wedding day, but occasionally some meeting intervened. In 1890 being unavoidably detained, he writes home : 'I have not forgotten yesterday as the anniversary of our happy union, and as the beginning of brighter days to *myself*, and as well

I hope to *you*. The interval has truly been a pleasant one, and I have reason to be grateful to that God who brought us together. If the future be as placid and pleasant as the past we will have still further reason to give thanks to the author and giver of all good things.' To the poor he was ever kind ; little children gathered round him and loved him ; even the dumb animals recognised his gentle loving heart ; but his softness of character, sympathy, and affection, combined with the brightness of his wit and humour, shone forth more in the quiet of his home circle than any other place. The worries of the day he could forget in the peaceful brightness of his fireside, to which he ever welcomed his true friends, and many a cheerful evening was spent telling of his experience when travelling about. His holiday on the Continent was always a pleasure to recall, and though it did not entirely restore him to health it revived and strengthened him considerably.

CHAPTER VIII

‘When the world’s up, and every swarm abroad
Keep thou thy temper ; . . .
Despatch necessities ; life hath a load
Which must be carried on, and safely may,
Then keep those cares without thee, let thy heart
Be God’s alone.’

VAUGHAN.

SOME time in 1880 a wonderful excitement was created in Ballina by a rumour being spread of an apparition of the ‘Blessed Virgin Mary,’ attended by St. Joseph and St. John, which had appeared to several persons on a night in the month of August. The Catholic Chapel of Knock was the favoured scene of these ‘Divine manifestations.’ Knock is a village about six miles from Ballyhaunis in the county of Mayo. The chapel both inside and out is humble and unpretentious in the extreme. Further apparitions had been witnessed on other occasions months later, the priest of the parish being among those who saw the strange sights. The report naturally excited a good deal of attention, and presently newspaper reporters were sent to collect evidence from eye-witnesses ! These stated that ‘miracles of healing were frequently wrought upon pilgrims who performed devotions at the favoured shrine, that miraculous virtues were possessed by the very plaster from the walls of the church, cures having been effected on persons residing, not only in distant parts of Ireland but even in England, by using portions of cement or mortar taken from the gable-wall, or the rain-water off the ground at its base !’ Some saw ‘the Blessed Virgin standing like a

statue with eyes uplifted'; St. John at times 'appeared dressed like a bishop!' Others saw 'an altar with a lamb on it round which moved wings of angels,' and various other strange stories were circulated. Crutches and sticks were thrown away in heaps under the delusion that they could be done without, but the unfortunate devotees had generally to replace them before long. Some of these discarded props were suspended from the boards that had to be put up to preserve the sacred wall from total demolition. All these excited the greatest reverence; hundreds of people knelt before them praying, others performed 'stations' round the chapel telling their beads as they went. The sound of their voices could be heard at a distance from the edifice, the floor of which became full of holes made by the people carrying away the earth. When these doings had been going on for several months a member of the Connaught Presbytery asked Mr. Armstrong to go with him to Knock that they might see for themselves the cause of all this excitement. There was no danger to be apprehended, as the people were always pleased to see Protestants going, so the clergymen proceeded on their visit of investigation. They observed the state of dilapidation the chapel wall presented, the number of broken crutches lying about, the holes from which the mortar or the earth had been taken, but no angels fluttered round, nor did any Heavenly vision appear. Perhaps as the evenings were growing brighter the 'Blessed Lady' and her companions had ceased to make their nocturnal visits, or perhaps the beholders were not worthy of the honour. Be that as it may they saw no vision. But anxious to know what the people living in the neighbourhood thought of the affair they spoke to several respectable persons. Some merely expressed wonder, some shook their heads, some thought great faith was required by those who received benefit. One suggested that phosphorus might have something to do with it all as well as faith. The impression left on the minds of the two visitors was that the whole thing was a cleverly got-up delusion to bring this out-of-the-way place into notice and importance. Of course no Roman

Catholic expected these Protestant clergymen to believe in the apparitions, nor were they offended at their not doing so. At the meeting of the next General Assembly Mr. Armstrong was asked to give an account of this visit to Knock. This he declined to do, feeling it might not be wise to make any public comment upon it, but being very much urged and assured that there was no reporter present he told some things about his visit and the observations made to him at the place. Contrary to expectations a reporter was in the house, who took notes, and sent them to the proprietor of a Western paper. Just at this time Mr. Armstrong had made arrangements to go to Edinburgh to consult a specialist about his health. His wife joined him in Scotland, where he was obliged to remain several weeks. Little did he think, while he lay suffering in Edinburgh, he was for the first and only time in his life the subject of insult and violence. It was a large fair day, many strangers of a rough class were in town, who knew nothing of Mr. Armstrong except what they had read in the newspaper of his exposing the 'visions' at Knock. They got intoxicated with drink and rage, and gathering a crowd of drunken wild fanatics they rushed down the street to attack our house and ourselves. There was no person at home but our gentle mother, who was greatly frightened. Several gentlemen came running in, and told her to go with her maid to the back of the house, and shut up all the front windows and the hall door as stones might be thrown, and no one could tell what the mob might do. On they came with drum and wild cries, carrying a figure dressed as a clergyman to be burned as Mr. Armstrong's effigy! The police-officer who lived opposite us showed great determination and cool manly courage. The police, who were all most friendly with Mr. Armstrong, did their part well also. A cordon was formed across the street, and the mob soon turned in another direction, and quiet was quickly restored. One policeman seized the drum, another laid hold of the effigy. The drum was afterwards given to the boys in the orphanage, who used it in their little flute band for many years. The

police who acted so bravely were, I believe, suitably rewarded, as they well deserved to be, and the riotous proceedings passed off without much harm being done, but the occurrence showed what a risk any person ran who had the courage of his convictions, or who dared to cast a doubt on the deceptions practised on these superstitious visitors to Knock. The townspeople were most indignant at this treatment of Mr. Armstrong, and on our return from Scotland some weeks later we were met at the railway station by the Roman Catholic Bishop and some other Roman Catholic friends, all anxious to express their pleasure at seeing Mr. Armstrong return in renewed health, and many were the prayers that he might be long spared to continue his work among the children, for taking care of and providing for orphans is regarded as a most meritorious work among the Roman Catholic laity. Those who originated the disturbance quietly disappeared, and the miraculous appearances at Knock became a tale of the past. Mr. Armstrong's health was so much re-established that he continued his labours with renewed vigour for several years, being as he ever was the friend of almost every family in town, beloved by the poor, consulted and trusted by all classes.

CHAPTER IX

'The memory of the just is truly blest ;
And fragrant thoughts of thee shall ever blend,
With thy loved name *Victoria*—Queen at rest.'

I N the year 1883 Mr. Armstrong made a considerable addition to the orphanage, thereby largely promoting the comfort and convenience of the inmates. A stone bearing the word 'Ebenezer' was placed over the front of the new building ; for truly the superintendent fully realized and acknowledged the guiding and helping hand of the Lord, and in this spirit of gratitude, with faith in God, cherished the hope that the ordinary income would not only be maintained, but that the debt of £250 on the new building would be cleared off. This hope he had the pleasure of seeing realized before long. He spent some weeks in London the following year, and was much cheered by the kind and liberal response to his appeal which he met with. His genial, unobtrusive manner, and gracious acknowledgment of even small contributions, gained him many friends, as well as subscriptions. Portrush, in Co. Antrim, he frequently made his headquarters, from which, as a centre, he could reach many country congregations. Both he and his wife—who generally accompanied him in these summer excursions—frequently recalled with grateful memories the kindness received in country manses, and the pleasant intercourse enjoyed among his brethren and their families in numerous ministerial homes in the North of Ireland.

In the year 1887, famous for being the Jubilee of her

most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, Mr. Armstrong was nominated by several presbyteries as a candidate for the Moderator's Chair of the General Assembly. He had for several years objected to his name being mentioned for this honour; but the Connaught Presbytery became so urgent that he reluctantly consented. The ministers thought he was well fitted for the chair, and deserved some recognition from the Church for the laborious work he had done in connection with the Irish Mission in many ways. He had by his own personal efforts, they all knew, raised over £40,000 for the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Armstrong, though appreciating his friends' kind feeling towards himself, retired in favour of another, and proceeded after the Assembly to pursue his work in London, where he had made many friends and supporters. This year he had also the pleasure of joining in the celebrations of the Jubilee honours paid to Queen Victoria the Good, of whom he was ever a loyal, faithful, and loving subject.

The year after this Mr. Armstrong was again nominated as a candidate for the Moderatorship of Assembly. An extract from a leading Belfast newspaper says: 'Mr. Armstrong, having gracefully retired last year, is now, surely, the fitting person for the Church to put forward. For upwards of forty years he has occupied an important position in Connaught. . . . It would be a graceful act to call Mr. Armstrong unanimously to the chair at the next General Assembly, conferring the only honour our Church has in her power to bestow on one who has so long and so faithfully laboured in the Home Mission field.' Another writes: 'Mr. Armstrong is one of our best business men, a ready speaker, and a kind friend; his genial, gentlemanly, Christian bearing has endeared him to a large number of friends. . . . He is a preacher of more than ordinary ability, and we have few lecturers to compare with him,' etc. However, notwithstanding all these flattering speeches he declined the honour, and would not allow his name to be put forward. About this time he was much interested, and active in forwarding a project for providing the town

of Ballina with pipe-water. Improvements travel slowly in the West, and, strange as it may seem, the proposal was strongly opposed by some, while the majority were anxious to have the water brought in. Finally, his desire was accomplished, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the town enjoy a plentiful supply of pure water.

CHAPTER X

‘ Little merry laughing child,
Ever playful, ever wild,
Full of gladness—full of love,
God has made thee—God above.’

I N the summer of 1888 the orphanage was much in need of repairs. Mr. Armstrong rented a cottage at Ennis-crone, a watering-place six miles from Ballina. Here we went for a month, and took all our large family along with us. The preparations for the trip caused no small amount of interest and excitement ; even the cat was not forgotten in the general exodus. A very enjoyable drive brought us to the cottage. Many of the children had never seen the sea, and were perfectly astonished when the broad Atlantic came in sight. Having arrived at the cottage, the first important business was to get boys and girls, babies and belongings, into their respective places ; some were sent off to procure provisions for the first meal in the new abode, some to light fires ; and soon the comforting sound of the tea-kettle and the musical ring of cups and saucers were heard amid the general hubbub of voices—singing, chattering, and laughing—giving promise of a reviving cup of tea and homelike family gathering. Everything around was new, and called forth numerous funny observations from the little ones, according to their varied views of things. Soon the ringing of the tea-bell summoned the lively party round a well-spread board, and a calm ensued ; presently a sweet voice raised the usual hymn, and all joined in the thanksgiving—a picture never to be forgotten by those who lovingly witnessed the children’s first happy evening in

their seaside cottage home. The holidays passed quickly and pleasantly, and were drawing to a close, when a severe thunderstorm broke over the place. Mr. Armstrong himself had regularly taken charge of the boys bathing, and greatly enjoyed watching their sport in the water. An iron vessel had been wrecked close to the bathing-place ; a large portion of it was raised above the sand, which the boys utilized as dressing apartments. On the morning of the thunder-storm Mr. Armstrong went with the little flock, as usual, little dreaming of the impending danger ; just while the lads were enjoying their dip, the roar of thunder was heard, and the lightning became so vivid that Mr. Armstrong called the children hastily in, and, fearing danger from the steel of the ship, vigorously signed to them to hurry home, himself following them up the steep cliff, to shorten the way, as the rain descended in torrents. With all the haste he could make, he was thoroughly drenched before he reached the house ; dry clothes were quickly brought, but before they could be changed he had fainted. Thus ended a bright and happy holiday, and commenced a season of suffering and trial. A few days afterwards we returned to the orphanage with our refreshed and joyous band. Then began another year of busy school-work and cheerful family life for the children, but to those who had the care of them one of weakness and fear ; and just at the season when in other years Mr. Armstrong would have been preparing for his English and Scotch journeys, the pen fell from his nerveless hand, and the overstrained heart suddenly collapsed, and a second time it seemed as if the shepherd must bid farewell to his flock for ever. But God is often more gracious to us than we in our hour of sorrow anticipate, and the labourer's work was not done ; yet other lambs there were to be gathered into the fold. But perfect rest and change to a warmer climate were pronounced by the medical men to be the only chance of recovery, and so it came to pass that, through the kind liberality of friends who valued and loved him, Mr. Armstrong was shortly on his way to France, accompanied by his wife, whose loving care could not be dispensed with.

CHAPTER XI

‘ Either grief will not come, or if it must,
Do not forecast.
And while it cometh, it is almost past,
Away distrust—
My God hath promised—He is just.’

HERBERT.

MR. ARMSTRONG bore the long journey to London wonderfully well, considering his great weakness, and even the crossing to France ; but the journey to the South was too much to proceed with without a break, so we rested at Lyons. This well-built city, famous for its silk trade, is beautifully situated between two rivers ; but the fogs in winter are dense, and the cold intense. Except in Genoa—that city of marble and of mighty winds—we never experienced anything like the cold and damp while we were on the Continent. The season for visitors had but just commenced, and the comfortless china stoves seemed only to draw the damp from the walls and furniture ; even the beds were damp and musty. Fortunately, I had brought with us some warm rugs, which I rolled round my husband over his clothes, and he rested on the outside of his bed ; but, notwithstanding all my care, he got a severe cold, and the two weeks following which we spent in Cannes I shall never forget. My school French I had almost forgotten. In the hotel we were the only visitors who had arrived ; the English servants had not yet come, and no one in the house knew a word of English. The mosquitoes ravenously attacked us new-comers, and, above all trials, I thought my dear husband was dying. Our home letters,

owing to some mistake, were delayed. A severe thunder-storm came on the day after we arrived ; it lasted for two days and nights. The rains descended and the floods came, as if a veritable deluge were imminent ; the fruit-trees in the garden seemed to be growing in water. The situation was serious, and with that terrible cough, which nothing relieved, my heart felt crushed and lonely ; how I often longed for the home comforts so far away ! I shall ever recall with a feeling of wretchedness that first week in Cannes. But better times were before us. On opening the window-shutters one morning, the sun nearly blinded me ! Not a cloud was to be seen as large as a man's hand ; the ground in the garden was sandy and dry, the orange and palm-trees refreshed and beautiful, and Nature looked as placid as if never a storm had ruffled her face. We went out as soon as possible, and were fortunate in finding a good English doctor, whose prescriptions much relieved the trying cough, and whose friendly conversation cheered my poor husband. We also found out a Scotch minister, like ourselves but just arrived, to take charge of the Presbyterian congregation which gathers each year in Cannes as in other places on the Continent. The weather continued warm and bright, so that we were able to make little excursions to the many places of interest round about ; we had some amusing interviews with the peasants we met, but generally managed to make them understand what we meant. Altogether, the variety and lovely bright sunshine had improved my husband's health ; so the end of our stay at Cannes was very much better than the beginning.

The entrance into Cannes is beautiful ; how I wished the train would go slower, that I might admire the variety of pictures Nature presented as we went along ! The Mediterranean shone here and there among the hills like jewels set for glory and beauty. We were much amused at the washing of clothes. The women put up lines along the sea-shore, on which they hang the clothes to dry. In the towns along the seashore the washing is done in the sea. The stones do duty for wash-boards ; the finest cambric is subject to the usual treatment, which would rend the heart

of the wearer as well as the threads of the material ; but the linen is made so clean and white one forgets the severe treatment it receives as long as it keeps together, perhaps nearly as long as if washed in a steam-laundry at home. We saw a funny washing-party in Grasse, that garden of jessamine and roses, on the hill above Cannes. Though the situation is elevated, it is warm here even in spring and winter. A space is walled in, in the centre of this village, through which runs a little river from end to end, on either side of which stood a number of women with dresses artistically tucked up, bare feet, and very broad hats, pounding away at their clothes in the running water, or on stone benches placed round the wall. All these new scenes, with the change of air, by the blessing of God, so much improved Mr. Armstrong's health that we were able to continue our journey to Nice. We went to a hotel on the Promenade des Anglais ; next morning we found comfortable accommodation in a pension, the top story of which had been blown off during the severe earthquake which more than a year before had destroyed whole towns in France. Here we met with very nice, kind people, and basked in the glorious sunshine under the leafy boughs of orange-trees in full flower and fruit. The orange, like the arbutus of Killarney, bears the flower of the fruit for the following year with the fruit of the season, causing a very pretty effect. Here my husband renewed his acquaintance with Rev. Dr. Murry Mitchell, who was supplying the Presbyterian pulpit in Nice that year. The society of Dr. and Mrs. Mitchell was a great boon to us in this foreign country. Their house was ever hospitably open to us, and their advice on many subjects valuable. At the manse we met many agreeable people. This social intercourse added much interest to our stay at Nice, and, joined with the freedom from mental worry and the mildness of the climate, produced such an improvement in Mr. Armstrong's health that he began to think of returning home ; but friends forbade this. He had a great desire to see Rome ; he had not been able to accomplish this desire when previously visiting the Continent, and though several people tried to

dissuade him, he said he would either see Rome or go home ! Seeing his great anxiety to visit the Eternal City, with rather a fearful heart, I made preparations for continuing our tour. I did not wish him to go back to Ballina just then, and thought, after all, when his heart was so set on going to Italy, it might be for the best ; so, with many pleasant memories stored up, and friendly adieus, we started for Italy.

CHAPTER XII

I love the glittering sapphire sea,
The beauteous flowers I love,
But best of all, I love these hills,
Which lift their heads above.

When with unrest my heart is filled
Like ocean swelling high,
Or like the sweetest flowers that bloom,
My comforts fade and die ;

Then, as the everlasting hills
May my faith firm abide,
Rise, far above the ills of life,
And in the Heavens me hide.

OUR first stop was at Menton. We found accommodation in a hotel, where Mr. Spurgeon was then located. Mr. Armstrong enjoyed an occasional chat with this great and good man, and we had the privilege of joining in a service held in his own room, at which Mr. Spurgeon dispensed the Communion each Sabbath afternoon. Mr. Armstrong, though attached to his own particular denomination, was no bigot. He had more than once joined those who sat at the Lord's table in Mr. Spurgeon's tabernacle in London, and on one occasion dispensed the Communion for him. Some of our company in the hotel were great Home Rulers. One day at dinner a discussion arose, and the Home Rulers seemed to be having it all their own way. Mr. Armstrong, who was a staunch Unionist, listened quietly for some time. At length he could bear it no longer ; as with a sudden impulse, the old spirit revived, and, to the amazement of everyone present,

the quiet, delicate man burst forth in such a strong denunciation of Home Rule that the whole tide of argument was turned ; his slumbering but now revived eloquence carried most of the company with him, and his opponents were silent for the time being. Mr. Spurgeon sat at the end of the table, much entertained. At a convenient pause a voice came from where he sat, ' There's life in the old dog yet.' A burst of amusement amicably ended the argument, but there was no doubt as to the side on which Mr. Armstrong stood. Thus it ever was with him : gentle, retiring, never courting argument for argument's sake, following peace with all men, but never afraid to defend the cause he believed in, or maintain the position he thought right. Menton, as is generally known, is a border town between France and Italy. It was taken by the French from the Italians at the time of the Franco-Prussian War. A small stream runs on the outside of the town, which is the dividing line between the two countries. It is a curious thing to see a French soldier on one side of the stream, and an Italian on the other, sitting or standing all day long, with rifle in hand ; they chat in a most friendly manner to each other across the rivulet, but if either man stepped over to the other side their rifles would at once be brought into action. Thus they keep their patriotic vigil day by day.

With feelings of regret, we left Mentone and pressed on to Genoa. Truly, Genoa the superb ! substantially built, beautiful for situation, but ah ! the wind ! The streets, narrow to enable the inhabitants to walk through the town during the scorching summer, but acting in winter as so many tunnels, causing the wind to press more powerfully on those unfortunate strangers like ourselves, who were trying to pursue their way and see the sights of the town. We lodged with a widow lady, a German by birth ; her husband had been a Russian, and they had resided for some years in America. Her means were small. She was a gifted linguist ; and she very kindly gave me some few lessons in Italian, which, though not enabling me to speak the language, I found very useful. Her house was large and well situated, but the marble halls had not the pleasing effect

on *me* that the poor slave experienced in his dream. It was freezing ; no fire in the china stove could warm us, and again I felt nervous as to the effect on my husband. However, he was stronger than when we left home, and he bore it better. He was intensely amused at our little maid, who rejoiced in the name of Ramedia ; her undisguised contempt for the manner in which I pronounced the words when I tried to speak to her, and the excited way she laughed and clapped her hands as the English lady mutilated her beautiful language, were quite an entertainment to him—so different from the French, who never laugh at our English mistakes, but help us to say what we want. Madame B—— was very kind ; she was almost blind, but she offered to come out with me to show me some shops. To this day I cannot understand how she threaded her way among the carts and cattle we met in those narrow streets, without footpath of any kind ; for with all my good sight I was nearly run over more than once, through my anxiety about her. Mr. Armstrong was getting very tired of the way fowl was sent to the table on the Continent. On one occasion our landlady had got a present of some from Lombardy, but, as usual, they came to table all cut up and tasteless. My husband said he would like to see a whole fowl on the dish, as at home. ‘ But,’ said our hostess ‘ who would cut it up ? If you will undertake to carve one, I will have it cooked whole.’ So it was settled. Next day in came Ramedia bearing a large dish ; when the cover was removed, a huge Turkey lay on its breast, with neck, wings, and feet all spread out. The carving was certainly difficult, and, contrary to our English mode, the turkey was stuffed with onions. Madame was rather vexed by our evident surprise ; however, my dear husband, with his usual kind consideration for others, made the best of it, and our dinner passed off pleasantly. Next morning Madame came to see me, with the request that I would go to the kitchen and show her young cook how to dress a duck in the English way. On entering the kitchen, a great difficulty presented itself. The cook could speak no English, and I could not speak Italian ; but, by the aid of Madame as interpreter

and a plentiful use of signs, we managed very well. The duck was prepared, cooked, and presented at table. All pronounced it quite a success. Madam was much gratified, and said in future she would have ducks cooked in this way, and call the dish 'duck à la Armstrong.' We found out the Presbyterian clergyman in Genoa, and were hospitably entertained in the manse, where we found a cheerful fire burning in a genuine English grate—the first we had seen since we left London. The Campo Santo is the finest we saw in Italy; round a covered passage raised above the general burying-ground there are so many beautiful marble monuments it is more like a museum than a graveyard.

Leaving Genoa with pleasing recollections, we passed on to Pisa, where we spent but one night. We drove next morning from the hotel to the Duomo. In the baptistry an infant was being baptized from the same font which held the water for the baptism of Emperors and statesmen. Mr. Armstrong sat in a carriage below, while I ascended the wonderful leaning tower. The sensation going up is peculiar, and not pleasant on the leaning side. The top is railed in, so that one can walk round if not too nervous. I went outside; what a picture came beneath my gaze! The day was clear. The landscape was indeed fine, but what most attracted my attention were the snow-white, hills of Carrara, the marble pure and glistening in the sunshine as if covered with snow; while at the foot of the tower peacefully and patiently sat my dear husband, quietly enjoying *my* pleasure, in which he could not actively join. That scene oft rises before me still. The marble hills remain, but the beloved one who then sat in weakness below has exchanged this earth for heaven, weakness for strength. He is exalted far above earthly heights, while I still remain below.

‘For me he waits at the golden gates,
Until I come.’

In the afternoon we passed on to Florence, that city of sculpture and painting, the home of Michelangelo and many other famous artists. Here we spent a few weeks,

visiting the art galleries and other interesting places, in company with some Scotch friends also travelling about. We enjoyed the hospitality of Dr. Robertson, the Presbyterian clergyman, whose congenial intercourse tended to brighten and cheer the invalid. On looking back over our sojourn in foreign places and among strange people, I gratefully do, and ever shall, remember with kindest feeling all those who in any way helped to comfort and cheer one who ever tried to comfort others, especially the sad and lonely. The vicinity of the Arno at some seasons of the year is rather trying. Heavy fogs gather along the river ; so, having admired the works of art and the beauties of Nature which abound in Florence, we continued our journey towards Rome. Señor Gavazzi died when we were in Florence. His remains were cremated in Rome. Most of the Protestant clergymen attended his funeral, but some objected to go on account of his being cremated. On a bright, frosty afternoon our train steamed slowly into Rome. When I looked at the expression on my dear husband's face, my fears for him vanished. I felt we had acted wisely in coming to Rome. His dream of a lifetime was realized. The look of care, which even during our pleasant tour often appeared on his face, had vanished. The climax had come, and even as the old Apostle Paul had rejoiced at the fulfilment of his earnest desire, so he was satisfied, and my mind was at ease.

CHAPTER XIII

'Thou art the garden of the world, the home
Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree ;
E'en in thy desert, what is like to thee ?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility,
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced,
With an immaculate charm, which cannot be defaced.'
BYRON.

'ROMA ! Roma !' was called out on all sides. What a sensation the word created ! But our dreams were cut short by the door being suddenly opened, and a pleasant, unknown voice inquiring, 'Is the Rev. Thomas Armstrong of Ballina here ?' My husband really started, wondering who could know him or expect him in Rome. However, the mystery was soon explained. A lady who had been with us in Nice had preceded us to Rome, and, thinking we would be comfortable at the hotel she had gone to, sent the landlord every evening to the train to see if we had arrived. At last he found us, and we were quite pleased to be in his house. He was a man of intelligence, and gave us some very useful information, which assisted us in our sightseeing. He was a German Roman Catholic, very broad-minded and liberal ; he respected his own church, but disliked the clergy. He preferred the plain and simple form of worship which he found in the Methodist or Presbyterian churches to what he called the absurd and theatrical performances of his own. The first week we spent in Rome we went about with a conducted party ; this gave us a good idea of localities, and enabled us afterwards to find the various places of interest ourselves. With

Mr. Armstrong's knowledge of history, it was a great pleasure to wander about through old Rome. We attended some wonderful ceremonies in St. Peter's and other notable churches, which were observed at this Christmas season. We visited the Vatican, and almost came in contact with the Pope, as we were examining some memorial slabs which had been removed from the catacombs to the Lapidarian Gallery. The last Pope regarded himself as a prisoner since he lost his temporal power, and took his daily promenade within the Vatican ; it seemed the Lapidarian Gallery was a favourite walk, so before we had quite reached the end of it we were hurried out by the Swiss guards who preceded His Holiness ; but we were satisfied to retire, as we had seen all we wanted. The Imperial Palace on the Quirinal was very interesting ; but we enjoyed nothing more than wandering about the Palatina, where are the ruined palaces of the Cæsars—temples and monuments of fallen greatness, of ages and customs long passed away, demolished grandeur, scenes of ancient historic events, religious persecution, and social wickedness in high places. The Coliseum, that symbol of Rome's greatness, though in ruins, is still marvellously impressive, with its tiers of seats still observable, and its chambers beneath, where it is believed the wild animals were kept for the games, and brought up in boxes to the arena by means of pulleys ; the chains are still to be seen. The catacombs—those homes of the early Christians, and burial-places of their dead—were of intense interest to my husband. He had lectured on the subject years before, and it was a great gratification to him to have his opinions confirmed by his visit to these resting-places of Christian martyrs who objected to cremation. The pleasure of exploring these passages was indeed great, as we cautiously followed our guide by the dim light of little tapers which we carried. The turns are so frequent and the passages so numerous one might easily get lost, if separated from the company. Ancient Rome is in a great measure disappearing before modern improvements ; yet there is much that can never pass away. The everlasting hills remain, and the work of

excavation has done much to enlighten and interest travellers. What a change has time wrought ! we felt, as we compared the wretched dungeon in which Paul was chained with the neat little church in which the old Gospel for which Paul suffered is now preached. The first week of the year was observed as a week of prayer. United services were held on alternate days in each of the three Protestant churches. Our little place of worship is in a celebrated street—the Via Vente Settembre—called so from the Italians having entered Rome by this way on September 20, 1870, under Victor Emanuel, when the States of the Church became incorporated with the kingdom of Italy.

CHAPTER XIV

The ocean hath its melody,
The waves their chorus deep ;
But give to me those mountains bold,
With rugged forms and steep.

THE rest and interest of mind had done more to restore Mr. Armstrong's health than even I, with my most sanguine hopes, had anticipated ; but we were obliged to bring our trip to an end. Before doing so, we thought we would try and see Naples. We were fully repaid for this extra journey. We drove up Vesuvius, which was rather active at the time ; visited the Island of Capri ; went into the Blue Grotto, that marvel of Nature, illuminated as by electric light, yet where the light comes from is still a matter of speculation. Of Naples, with its Bay of Beauty, its orange groves and picturesque scenery, it may truly be said 'every prospect pleases,' but oh, the wretchedness of the inhabitants—the sores on man and beast ; the blind beggars in the streets—the halt—the maimed !—reminding one of the times when Jesus was on earth. What a comment on Bible Christianity ! No hospitals, no orphanages, no charitable institutions of any kind for the relief of human suffering as in our more favoured country.

In Naples we were much amused at the variety of animals used for drawing carts. A cow and an ass or a mule fastened together, and on one occasion at least, a goat joined with two other animals of different kinds. There is a curious place near Naples called Grotto del Cannis. There are three chambers—one of saltpetre and sulphur, one of ammonia, and one of carbonic acid. The fumes lie

near the ground. There were a number of nice little dogs running about outside ; our guide took one up in his arms and carried it in. When we came to the entrance of the carbonic-acid chamber, he signed to us not to enter, but he laid the little dog down just inside ; in a few minutes it became quite rigid, and we thought it was dead. My husband was vexed, being fond of dogs ; but the man lifted it up, and brought it out to the air, where it soon revived. He then gave it something to eat, and it seemed quite ready to go in again ; but we did not like it—it was so cruel. There seems to be a subterranean passage from Vesuvius to this grotto ; through an aperture in one of the chambers the smoke and heat are constantly coming up. Our cabman spoke English fluently ; he said he learned it from the Americans ! Our next excursion was to Sorrento. We had to go from the boat up a long, steep passage through the rock to the hotel. A small donkey-carriage waited at the boat for travellers ; I wanted my husband to go in the conveyance, but our guide quietly advised me to let him walk slowly, and, fortunately, I took his advice. Several took seats, and off went the little donkey quite briskly ; when about a third of the way up he fell ! The passengers all got out, some much frightened, and pursued their tiresome way on foot. The donkey got up, having received no injury, and trotted down again for another load, possibly to be treated in a similar manner. He was rather a wise little animal ; the fare being paid before starting, he did not see why he should take such a tiresome journey for strangers who were as well able to walk as he was himself, so he lay down at the most convenient place ! Returning to Rome, we visited Tivoli, the ancient Tibur, which, according to tradition, existed before the foundations of Rome. Mounted on donkeys, we enjoyed the beautiful scenery without fatigue. Our guide was very amusing, but our conversation, for obvious reasons, was not very fluent. One time, as we rode quietly along, my husband, who was on a very tall donkey, leading the way, was approaching an archway in the rock. The guide, suddenly observing that Mr. Armstrong's head was in danger of coming in

contact with the rock, rushed up to me, and, clutching at my dress in a most excited manner, uttered a warning in three languages—'Monsieur tell capit !' His expression of fear and anxiety caused me to look forward, and, seeing the situation, I called quickly to my husband, 'Stoop your head !' The poor man looked his gratitude as we proceeded. The donkeys are very fine little animals, larger than we generally see at home, but one is apt to forget that they are not acquainted with our English ways and speech. Mr. Armstrong sometimes wished to stop, that he might admire the landscape more particularly, but his donkey, ignoring all commands or entreaties, proceeded on its way. At last the idea flashed upon his rider that he did not understand English, so he addressed the animal in Latin. At once the creature became most docile and obedient. On our homeward journey we visited Venice and Milan, Lakes Como and Maggiore, and came through the famous St. Gothard tunnel to Lucerne. The Campanile in Venice was then an object of interest ; the ascent was easy, being a gradual incline, with one step at each corner. Napoleon is said to have ridden to the top. This magnificent tower collapsed not long ago. The Duomo of St. Marco, it is feared, may ultimately share the same fate ; the crypt had for some time been under water, we were told. The Venetian mosaic on this church both inside and outside is marvellous, the Bible scenes in that Roman Catholic country bearing witness to the truth of Scripture history. A severe snow-storm came on the day we left Italy. The views along the wonderful St. Gothard Railway, as we mounted higher and higher, were grand and magnificent. We only remained a few days to rest at Lucerne. The snow lay thick everywhere, dry and pleasant, so unlike snow at home. We took a short trip up the lake of the five cantons. The sunset was beautiful—the sky shaded from the brightest carmine to the softest pink, purple, blue, and golden. The hills, some clad in their snowy dress, reflected the glory of the tinted sky, the colouring of which in this country we can hardly form an idea. We reached the railway-station by sleigh, and started on our homeward

journey filled with gratitude to our Heavenly Father, who had protected and blessed us all through our wanderings, with health restored and many comforts. So ended our pleasant holiday, which to the end of his life he looked back upon with much gratification, and which by God's help enabled him to continue his work in Connaught for six years longer. We found all well at home. The children were delighted to see us back again, and gave us a hearty welcome with band and banners. The matrons who had done all in their power to make our minds easy during our absence, more anxious than even when we were at home to carry on the work wisely and well, manifested their pleasure at our return. The minister of Ballina also had taken a kindly oversight, which was not forgotten by Mr. Armstrong.

When we compared the wretchedness, depravity, and superstition which we had seen in those countries where the Word of God is not freely given, we felt more anxious than ever to train those committed to our care in that knowledge which not only makes wise unto salvation, but refines and purifies the daily life.



‘OUR GENTLE MOTHER.’

[To face page 235.]

CHAPTER XV

'She stretched her limbs, composed her arms,
As death had been the prince of charms,
Nor breathed a sigh or groan ;
And then the calm, the heavenly grace,
Which fell upon her reverend face—
Wrinkles, than roses blown,
Seemed fairer far ; the spirit shed
Such beauty as it upward fled
To the eternal throne.'

BETHUNE.

'So he giveth his beloved sleep.'

OUR dear mother greatly enjoyed hearing of all our varied experience while on the Continent. She often felt lonely in our absence, but with unselfish affection she rejoiced in all our pleasure. Only twice in all my life had I been so long separated from her, so it was a great joy to meet her in health once more. She had lived with us from our marriage in 1868, over twenty years. By Mr. Armstrong she was ever treated with the affection of a son, and his feelings she fully appreciated and returned. Her wise counsel he constantly sought in the management of the orphanage, and his solicitude for her comfort at all times, and especially in her time of great weakness, brought much consolation to this aged servant of God, as she gently fell asleep in the eighty-fourth year of her age. Her last words, 'Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace,' were fully answered ; with her dear head resting on my arm, she passed away like an infant falling asleep. She has left many precious memories to the writer, who, though

she must ever miss a good mother, looks forward to meeting again where parting is unknown. Her remains were laid to rest in the family grave in Killala churchyard. Her grandson-in-law, Rev. Charles Davey, of Belfast, addressed a large number of all denominations around her grave. Several ministers were present, and some members of the Connaught Presbytery took part in her funeral service ; an immense number of people came from long distances to attend her funeral, thus showing their respect for a member of an old esteemed family. Our usual Christmas reunion did not take place, owing to this removal from our home circle of one who had for many years taken a deep and active interest in the orphanage, and who, while her strength permitted, had been a constant visitor and kind superintendent. In later years, when unable to visit, her wise counsel, her believing prayers, and earnest sympathy, were ever a source of strength and comfort to us ; many now far away will recall in times of trial and difficulty the Christian teaching and motherly advice they received from our gentle mother.

Before that she left us to join in the song
Of all the redeemed and glorified throng.
Ah ! may they be ready to answer, I come,
Whene'er they are summoned to meet her at Home !
Home, home, eternal home,
At Jesus' right hand, may all meet her at Home !

CHAPTER XVI

Doubt saith, 'Can these revive?
These bones that bleaching on the valley lie?'
Faith answers, 'Christ can give
Them life : 'Tis His command to prophesy,
Go forth then thro' this land of death, and cry—
Look unto Him—and live.'

A. J. WILSON.

AFTER this break in our home circle, all things seemed changed. Mr. Armstrong got a severe attack of influenza ; his heart was very much affected, and his medical friend told him he must not venture to take his long journeys to England and Scotland alone for the future ; consequently, his wife had always to accompany him, which she did till his death in 1897.

When we review our lives, how often we find pain and pleasure coming side by side ! And so it happened that we had the joy of welcoming to our home one of our dear boys. He had at all times been a great favourite in the town, and was more like a member of our family than a stranger ; he always regarded Mr. Armstrong as a father, and wrote to his ' father ' and ' mother ' with the affection of a son. He writes from America, where he had gone to business : ' God has been with me and prospered me ; I have been at college all winter, and have been out preaching Jesus to a dying world ; God has called me to go as a missionary to Africa, to tell the poor people of His love. I hope to go home next month to see you both.' Having been licensed and ordained as a missionary by the American Christian Alliance, he came over to pay us a visit. He longed to preach in the little church where he had sat and listened as a child, but, owing to some other arrangements, this pleasure

was denied him. However, he was cordially invited to occupy the pulpit in the Methodist Church, where both morning and evening there was a good attendance, all pleased to show honour to one who was Mr. Armstrong's friend, and who had as a child endeared himself to them all. Some united meetings were got up, that all denominations might be able to hear and shake hands with our young friend before he left for the far country. Having reached Africa, he writes : ' My dear mother, your welcome letter to hand. I am glad to hear that dear father is still keeping well. Oh, how I should love to see you all once more ! I am enjoying very good health at present. The Lord is very good to me. My life here is a busy one. I have a large home, like the orphanage in Ballina ; I have eighty boys. On my arrival here, I found one of our missionaries ill with malarial fever. I am the only white man here now ; my dear colleague died of fever ; how I miss him ! But God makes no mistakes. I think I have told you about our brick church ; it will seat 500 people. I have a man laying bricks for an hospital and home for slave-boys ; I have fenced off about 25 acres, and after school some of the boys go to farm-work, others to brick-making, etc. A good part of my time is taken up hearing and settling " palavers." I have many souls for Jesus, and several of them are preparing to be evangelists. . . . I have your photographs hung over my desk. I have called my first convert Thomas, after dear father.' Again : ' The work here is going on grand ; the good Lord is blessing the weak efforts of his unworthy servant. I have had a very high fever, but I shall try to stay another year, till some others come out ; then I shall take a run home to see you dear ones.' He did come, but not till after we left Ballina, and returned soon again to Africa, taking out a good wife with him. He remained about five years longer in the African mission field, when his health entirely broke down, and he returned to America. After a severe struggle between life and death, he recovered, and, being asked to take chage of a vacant congregation, he settled in America, where he continues to carry on a good work, and is a devoted minister of Christ.

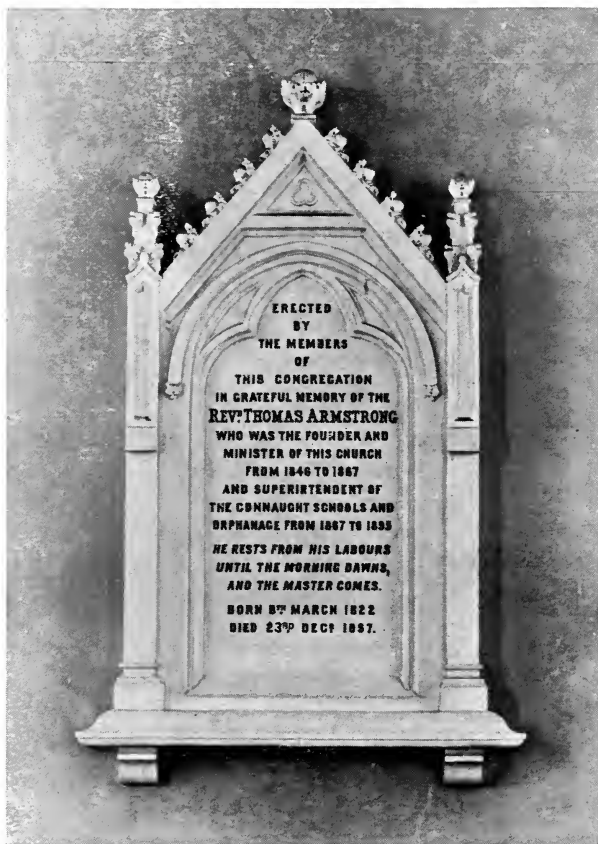
CHAPTER XVII

‘Forget us not ! Forget us not !
In that dread hour. . . .
Look down in mercy—Lord be nigh,
To curb the dying agony !
We are but dust—Forget us not !’

‘To thee will I look—in Thee confide—
For my times are in Thy right hand,
And oh ! to my spirit be sanctified—
Whatever Thy wisdom has planned.’

IN 1893 Mr. Armstrong's health again gave way. His friends advised him to retire, but his heart was in his work ; he often said he would like to ‘die in harness’ rather than be laid aside. The schools had increased in number, though a few in very remote localities had to be given up. The orphanage was flourishing ; the funds came in well, and everything was prosperous. Some old friends and collectors threatened to give up collecting for the schools, etc., when he resigned, so he said he would try and work as long as he was able. Thus two more years passed, but in 1895 he realized that he was unable to continue, and, by permission of the Mission Board, sent in his resignation to the Assembly. The question then arose where he would like to live, as he could not remain in Ballina. Dublin we both thought of ; but in Belfast alone had either of us any relations, so Belfast was decided upon. Mr. Armstrong also thought he would like to be able to attend the various meetings connected with the Church which are generally held in Belfast, and enjoy the society of his many ministerial friends in this Presbyterian city. But we are short-sighted

beings ; his hopes were never realized. We took a comfortable little house, and had just got settled, when he got a severe illness which completely prostrated him, together with frequent bad attacks of his heart so that he was very seldom able to attend any public meeting. He went out for short walks every day while he was able, but his breath was short and his steps feeble, and after two years of patient suffering and bodily infirmity, he laid aside his weariness and weakness, and entered on his eternal rest. Mr. Armstrong was a most regular attendant of all the Church courts scarcely ever missing a meeting of the Presbytery, Mission Board, or General Assembly. He was ever a reader—intelligent and intellectual. His reading was varied : history he knew well, and his knowledge of authors was extensive. His Greek Testament was his daily companion and study. He was a fair and unprejudiced politician, but a strong Unionist. He was not a musician, though he appreciated good music ; he could not sing one tune, but he could detect the slightest mistake in any he was acquainted with. He knew all the familiar old Psalm tunes by name, and was most particular that the words and tune should be adapted to each other. During his ministry in Ballina he always selected the tunes, as well as the Psalms himself. I have seen him look perfectly miserable when in some old country congregation a plaintive tune was sung to a praise Psalm, or such a Psalm as the fifty-first to a lively air. Sensitive he truly was. He was punctual and methodical, very particular as to keeping an engagement though far from strict or severe. He was not clever at doing things with his hands, but his quick repartee and keen sense of humour, his sound understanding and common-sense, manifested a superiority of mind of which he never was himself aware. He was a good debater, but seldom engaged in controversy ; he did not care for it. He was an interesting and instructive lecturer. Mr. Armstrong's house was always hospitably open to strangers and travellers. His means, never very large, were sufficient but he was too generous ever to grow rich. Grateful for kindness received from earthly friends, his sense of the



MEMORIAL IN BALLINA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

[To face page 261.]

goodness of his heavenly Father was ever present. He writes home, when returning from one of his long journeys through England and Scotland: 'At last I am again in Ireland, and I now record with gratitude to God His great goodness in my lengthened and laborious, but prosperous journey; and I look forward with great hope and anticipation to meeting with my loving and beloved wife, whom the Lord bless!' During his last illness his patience was remarkable, and his memory for Scripture always good, true to the text. Several friends who called to see him prayed with him. On one occasion in prayer a friend alluded to his often having been a blessing and a comfort to others, and asked God to remember his works of faith and labours of love. When he had finished, Mr. Armstrong said: 'Don't say that again, my friend; I am a poor sinner; I have never done enough for my Saviour, who did so much for me.' He often lamented his 'many shortcomings and inconsistencies,' but ever maintained a firm faith in Jesus, and confidence in His loving mercy and faithful promises. On December 22, 1897, his mind wandered considerably, and after a restless, troubled night, God took His suffering servant home. The last words repeated to him by his wife were those of the sweet hymn, 'I lay my sins on Jesus.' I believe he heard the 'angels' song' above very soon after the sound of her voice had faded on his ear below. He was laid to rest by a few friends on Christmas morning in the seventy-sixth year of his age—till that bright morning breaketh, which shall never end in night.

Mr. Armstrong was one of the first who joined the new congregation of Bloomfield. He watched the church building with much interest, and often said he would not be spared to worship in it; but he expressed the wish that his wife should take her part in working for the good of this new congregation. The minister spoke with much sympathy and kind feeling of him as one of the first and the oldest member of his church. A number of friends erected a handsome marble tablet in his old church in Ballina, where he is still remembered with much affection; and his resting-place in Belfast cemetery is also marked by a memorial-

stone erected by his wife, who now, lonely and solitary, seeks to run with patience her appointed race, while she looks forward with much desire to a happy reunion in God's good time.

‘ Rest, spirit free !

In the green pastures of the Heavenly shore,
Where sin and sorrow can approach no more,
With all the flock by the good shepherd fed,
Beside the streams of life eternal led,
For ever with thy God and Saviour blest,
Rest, sweetly rest !’

END OF PART II.

PART III

CHAPTER I

IN bringing this account of my husband's life and labours to a close, it is not my intention to give a lengthened record of much that might be of interest in connection with the Connaught schools and orphanage, nor to write eulogiums on the children who passed through these institutions, numbers of whom are still living and in respectable positions, scattered over the world. It is well known that children who are eligible for an orphanage frequently inherit delicate constitutions, and that, notwithstanding all the care that can be taken of them, they are often called early to their heavenly home; and it is with the desire that the pureness of the faith and the brightness of the hope of these 'early faded flowers' may be an encouragement to all who work among the young, that I venture to give an account of some of these happy death-beds; and I trust that the presence of Jesus may be as real to Christians of riper years as it was to these little ones. Further, I shall only add a few extracts from reports which may enable my readers to form some idea of the state of the country, social and religious, during the years of which I write.

In 1869 Mr. Armstrong writes: 'The mission schools in Connaught continue in a healthful and vigorous state; they have not been without their trials and discouragements on the one hand, and the tokens of good on the other, which have characterized their history for the twenty-one years of their existence.'

‘Fever has been very prevalent in the town, and we have had two cases in the orphanage. One child recovered ; the other little girl succumbed. She was of a weak constitution ; her end was very peaceful. From the commencement of her illness she seemed impressed with the idea that she would not recover, and before being taken to hospital bade all an affectionate farewell, saying she was going to her father, who was with Jesus. She had no fear of death ; a short time before she expired she said to the nurse : “ I am very comfortable now ; I will turn round and say my prayers, and then go to sleep.” These were her last words. The doctor who attended her was a Roman Catholic—a kind, fatherly man. He asked me if all my people died like this child. When I explained to him that those who trust in Jesus need not fear death, he exclaimed : “ I wish in my heart I could believe *that ; we* have no comfort nor peace in death.”’

The children of our schools often acted as missionaries. R. S. was the daughter of poor but respectable parents. She died at an early age. She learned of Jesus in the orphanage, where she was sheltered for a short time. Though a Protestant by birth, under pressure of poverty she was exposed to hostile influence. After returning to her home, her health—never good—broke down, but she was spared to bear testimony to her Saviour, then taken from much weakness to perfect joy above. In a touching letter from her father, we learn that she read her Bible constantly ; even when scarcely strong enough to listen, she would have it read to her, and died happy in her Saviour, exhorting her friends to love and trust Jesus, and follow her to heaven.

Extract from Report of 1871 : ‘Doubtless much more might be effected were there a firmer faith in the promises of God and the power of the Gospel of Christ. The soil we cultivate is as hard as a rock, and the enemies we have to face struggle for error as for very life ; but we labour not in vain, nor spend our strength for naught. We will still teach and preach, knowing that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy.’

One of our girls, who had just finished her apprenticeship in Dublin, came home to the orphanage to die. She had one kind relative who asked her to go and stay with her, but of course she must give up her Bible. We told her she must decide for herself—to go, or stay with us. Her answer was characteristic : ‘ I would love to go to the beautiful country, she said, ‘ but I know I would be persecuted, so I would rather stay.’ She made no great show of religion, but was a consistent Christian. If questioned as to her preparation for eternity, her answers were short but satisfactory. She never seemed to fear death. She suffered much pain and bodily weakness, but her mind was ever clear and calm. One Sabbath morning, when her companions were in church, her happy spirit was set free.

Extract from Report of 1873 : ‘ The evangelization of Ireland is a grand and noble idea, worthy of the Presbyterian Church, as the representative of the pure and primitive Church of Ireland. The efforts put forth for its accomplishment have been few and feeble, yet, after all, the success attending the Home Mission since its commencement to the present has been fully commensurate with the extent of the agency and the means employed. The Connaught schools, though humble, have been abundantly blessed and owned of God ; thousands of young people have through them received Scriptural instruction ; not a few have through times of fierce persecution testified to the reality of the saving change wrought on their hearts, and evidenced by their lives that the teaching of their early days was not in vain, while not a few rejoicing death-beds have shown the power of Divine grace.

‘ The institution in Ballina is the only one of the kind in this country that holds out equal privileges to Protestants and Roman Catholics. From the time of its establishment it has served the double purpose of orphanage and refuge home. The latter is much needed in a part of the country where mixed marriages have in the years gone by taken, and still take, from our Protestant population to swell the ranks of Popery. Perhaps had this been more attended to in the past, Connaught would not have been so benighted,

our Protestant churches would have been better filled, and ministers better supported, without the aid of friends at a distance.'

I shall close this chapter with an account written by the Rev. Mathew Kerr of Cork, formerly minister of Dromore West, Co. Sligo, of a pupil of the Dromore West Mission school, who had a remarkable career. His father was known as 'Blind Mitchell.' Patrick ultimately became a minister in America. At the time Mr. Armstrong ministered in Dromore West (1874), Patrick cherished the hope of paying a visit to his family and native land; but while we were all looking forward to his coming with exceeding interest and pleasure, news came that the Lord had taken His servant to Himself. Mr. Kerr writes :

'Patrick Mitchell was born in 1843. His parents were Roman Catholics, and lived on the sea-coast near Dromore West, Co. Sligo.

'Patrick was the elder of their two boys. He first came under my notice in the spring of 1849 in the Female Mission School that had been recently opened at Pullendiva Coast-guard station, near his father's house. He was very thoughtful and intelligent for his years, and became a great favourite in the school.

'At the time of which I am writing the effects of the famine had not quite passed away. The sea-shore gave food to many in the trying months of summer. Then you might see both old and young gathering seaweed and shellfish on the rocks when the tide was out. One summer evening after school Patrick had gone down with other children to the shore, when, losing his footing on the slippery stones, he fell, and hurt himself severely.

'This accident, which at the time appeared to us all to be a great calamity, was the turning-point in his life. His father and mother at once saw that his lameness would unfit him for any work except teaching, and so they agreed to my proposal to have him removed to the Dromore West school to be qualified to be a teacher. This arrangement was continued for many years—indeed, till 1862. All this time he attended the Sabbath school, and the Sabbath services at Dromore West, and grew up, with the full concurrence of his parents, a Protestant.

'When his course of training was over he received an appointment to a school in Kingstown. Thence he removed to Dublin, and from Dublin he crossed to England, in every change obtaining a better position. The seed sown in his heart had not yet brought forth fruit fully. How true the lesson of James: "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain." It was during his stay in Dublin that he was brought to rejoice in the knowledge of salvation.

'I had lost sight of him for some time. A letter, bearing date February 26, 1868, written from the neighbourhood of Warrington, Lancashire, gave me great joy. He writes:

"It is a long time since you have heard anything of me, and so it has occurred to me that you might wish to hear something of my welfare in which you formerly interested yourself so much. I do not and shall not forget that to your instrumentality I owe everything which the Lord has been pleased to do for me.

"I think it was in Kingstown that I last wrote to you. At that time I was going on well in some respects, but I was living then in a semi-careless, unsaved condition. About the beginning of 1865 it pleased the Lord to give me salvation through trust in Christ, and from that time to the present I have, blessed be His name, enjoyed the peace arising from confidence in His salvation.

'After a stay of a year and a half in Kingstown I accepted a school in Dublin in the north-west part of the city, and there the Lord gave me many opportunities to speak to the poor people in the houses and garrets. I always gave two or three hours every evening to the work of visiting, and it pleased the Lord to bring some souls from darkness to the blessed light of His Gospel, even by such poor instrumentality as mine. Against the pressure of opposition from the R—— C——s the Lord gave me strength to go on; but I felt often disheartened. Still, bearing in mind that I was not sent to carry on warfare at my own charges, I endeavoured to speak the Lord's Word till my health gave way from an attack of cholera, after which I was not much engaged in the Lord's active service. During this time I had also been reading, and was enabled to enter Trinity College, Dublin.

"I have stated so much of myself because I feel certain

it will enable you to realize the promise, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.' And if my case should be the means of giving you fresh courage to 'sow beside all waters,' I should indeed bless the Lord."

'His steps were directed to Memphis, Tennessee, U.S., instead of to London. Writing in June, 1872, to one who had often given him counsel at Dromore West—Robert Russell—he says: "It is due to you as an old friend to mention that I have been engaged principally in a college here as a professor during my stay, and that some time since I was ordained to the work of the ministry, although I still continue my former duties. My health, however, will soon oblige me to relinquish teaching. Already the Lord has blessed my labours among souls, and I anticipate still greater blessings when my whole time will be given to the work. I am a Baptist, but none the less a lover of the old Presbyterian Church, and I expect to labour side by side with her ministers when I meet them."

'He had gained the object of his struggles and prayers. He was now a minister of the Gospel, but his work was to be over very soon. Already symptoms of the disease that carried him off had appeared. Change brought only temporary relief, for consumption had laid its deadly hand upon him. He had set his heart upon visiting Ireland, and preaching the Gospel there. Increasing illness compelled him to relinquish this idea. Then he thought of spending the winter of 1872-73 in Florida. Before the close of the summer the progress of the disease made an immediate change necessary, and as Florida was not healthy so early in the season he sought health from the bracing air of Minnesota. The extreme cold of this northern state compelled him to seek another change—this time Colorado. Here he found a happy, Christian home in which to spend the latter months of his life. The minister in whose house he died, the Rev. J. M. Colburn, gives an account of the closing scene in a letter to his father, dated from Colorado Springs, April 30, 1873: "The Rev. P. L. Mitchell died at my house the 14th of this month. He came to this place on January 1 from Greely, where he had been about three months previously. He preached one sermon a week for the church till March 1, after which he was obliged to keep his room most of the time. He was so far gone with consumption when he came here that few thought he could live as long as he did.

He did not give up, but thought he might recover till four days before he died. For two months after he came to my house he gained strength, and all his symptoms seemed to indicate that he might recover. He was then taken worse, and sank gradually to the end. He talked about getting well enough to start for Ireland in the month of May. He wished to visit his home, and to preach Christ in his native land, if it was God's will; if not, he was resigned to die. He said if it was God's will he would like to live longer. He did not feel as if his work was done, but God knew best, and he trusted all to Him. He could say with confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He will take me to Himself." He endeared himself to the hearts of the members of the small church in this place, and was sincerely mourned by all who knew him. He came here for his health; he left us for a country where sickness, sorrow, pain, and death never come. We did everything for him that was possible for his comfort and for his restoration to health. He told me many times that he thanked God every day that He sent him to my house, where he could have such tender care, and that I could not have taken better care of him if he had been my son. He suffered a great deal, but was one of the most patient men I have ever seen. He was enabled to square all his worldly matters in this place. We buried him among the pines in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains.

'At the early age of thirty Patrick Mitchell rests from his labours. The regular letters, with generous help, from the devoted son, no longer come to the blind man's home.

'But the memory of the just is blessed, and his aged father and mother in their humble cabin sorrowed not without hope. The old man did not long survive his son. All three have now passed away, and, we trust, are rejoicing together in the presence of God their Saviour.'

CHAPTER II

IN 1878 Mr. Armstrong writes : ' We have been much encouraged by the Christian sympathy expressed by Dr. Johnston, Moderator of our Assembly, during his late visit to Connaught. Being himself engaged in a similar work, he is the better able to enter into our hopes and fears. His visit to the orphanage was received with much enthusiasm by the children, who always appreciate the kind words and faces of friends ; and Dr. Johnston's visit will long be remembered by them with pleasure.'

A report of the Ballina Orphanage would not be complete without a reference to the late Mr. Stewart, its founder, whose death about this time was a great loss to the institution. It was his money that built it, and later on he subscribed to enlarge and improve it. He was a regular and liberal contributor, and was ever anxious and pleased to hear of the well-being of the children whom he assisted to educate. In the heaven to which he has gone he will doubtless meet with many who have through his instrumentality been rescued from poverty, sin, and soul-destroying error—the kind benefactor and the little ones who partook of his bounty rejoicing together, and ascribing glory, honour, and praise to Him who gave himself for the poor as well as for the rich, for the unlearned as well as for the learned.

In 1880 Mr. Armstrong again writes : ' Since the memorable famine of '47 and '48 there has been nothing like to this for privation and destitution. There have, it is true, been no cases of death by starvation, but this is owing to the early interest excited, and the generous responses given

to the appeals sent, and to the wide and well-organized arrangements made for relief. Our Presbyterian people in Connaught are generally in better circumstances than the mass of the population, but in several localities not a few would have succumbed were it not for the seasonable aid given by their own Church at home, and their co-religionists in Britain and America. It is believed they will be successfully tided over the emergency, and that our Presbyterian cause will not suffer any serious diminution by the "year of distress." One feature of this time is noteworthy. Our ministers, with proverbial Christian philanthropy, have been most active and energetic in administering relief among the general population, who are almost entirely Roman Catholics; they have thus necessarily been brought into close contact with "R. C." ecclesiastics—bishops and priests—as well as with the laity. Their co-operation was hearty and harmonious, and redounded to the credit of our ministers, and also impressed the people with their disinterested benevolence and strict impartiality and integrity.'

About this time a little girl, who had been brought up in the orphanage and apprenticed in Dublin, was taken from her work on earth to join, we trust, the glorious band on high, who serve God for ever and ever. Her minister writes: 'You will be sorry to hear that poor G——, who has been in failing health for more than two months, suddenly getting worse, was placed by her mother in St. Vincent Hospital, that she might die in the faith of her father. I called to see her, and with difficulty got access to her. On questioning her, she spoke with the greatest emphasis of her faith in her Saviour *alone*, and said she had no fear of death. I had several talks with her during her illness, and I have no doubt as to her salvation. I believe her soul is with Jesus her Lord.'

In 1882 Mr. Armstrong continues: 'The bearing of the prevalent disorganization and outrages on our work varies, according to the peculiarities of each locality. In some districts the agitation seems to partake entirely of an agrarian and political character, without the exhibition of

angry religious passions ; elsewhere it is otherwise, and much prudence is required. No popular demonstration has been directed against our operations, and even in the wildest regions our agents have been unmolested. The schools exercise a quiet but decided influence in the promotion of peace and order. The pupils are taught to "fear God and honour the King," and as law-abiding and loyal subjects set a good example. Ireland is in many respects in a sad condition. It is humiliating to think that in this, the latter part of the nineteenth century, and within the circuit of the British Isles, there is not the security or regard for life and property which might be expected. Whatever political or social measures may be adopted, one thing is clear : the Gospel of salvation is the one sure hope for national peace and safety. Be ours the faith and prayer of good King Asa—"Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee." "

CHAPTER III

SOME years previous to the time I write, a respectable Protestant girl had been sent to the orphanage to be trained for domestic service ; she was quite desolate, having no friends who could keep her. After some training, she was sent as nursery-maid to a lady in town. She was of a sweet disposition, and endeared herself to her mistress, but her delicate constitution broke down under regular work. Her mistress, not having accommodation for an invalid, asked us to take her into the orphanage, and, friendless as she was, though contrary to our custom, we could not refuse. She had an attack of rheumatic fever ; when sufficiently recovered, she was brought downstairs, and, lying on a stretcher, was quite happy among the children. I recall with a feeling of tenderness the last time I heard her gentle voice, and met her look of grateful affection. I had been in the orphanage and left her so bright and happy-looking. I had scarcely entered my own house when I was recalled ; I ran hastily back, and there lay Fanny calm in death, her face bright with the last sweet smile, her gentle spirit gone home to God. Of her faith in Jesus we had no doubt, but she *lived*, rather than *talked*, her religion. Her sweet temper gave her face a look of peace and love ; her death made a solemn impression on the children in the orphanage, and her late mistress could never speak of her without tears.

1883 was a year of outrages and murders ; social disorganization largely prevailed, extraordinary legislative measures were found to be necessary, and condign punishment was inflicted on several of the guilty perpetrators

of crime. Mr. Armstrong writes : ' No remedial measures of a political or social character, however good, will meet the necessity of the case. It is the Gospel of grace, with its message of peace and goodwill to men, which alone can heal the bitter waters of strife, and calm the troubled sea of tumult and agitation.'

In 1883 another of our lambs was gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd. M. P., one of the brightest and most lively girls in the orphanage, was stricken with a low, lingering fever. She was a clever, intelligent child, about twelve years, of age one of the last we would have thought likely to be called away. We were reluctantly obliged to remove her to the hospital, not at the time having rooms for sick children. Her mother was brought to see her, and remained with her to the last. The hospital nurse, a Roman Catholic, was very kind to her, and encouraged her to repeat hymns and texts of Scripture. We saw her frequently, and she watched for our coming anxiously. She often spoke of dying, and, though most anxious to recover, expressed herself satisfied with God's will concerning her. Her faith in Jesus as her Saviour was very clear, and her love warm, as was her nature. Fever ended in rapid consumption. The day before she died we went to see her ; she could not speak. I said : ' Maggie, do you know me ? ' For answer she raised her arms, and throwing them round my neck, drew me close down to take a last and loving farewell. I missed her bright face and merry ways for many a long day ; but I believe I shall not miss her among that happy throng which stand around the throne of God in heaven, ' having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

In 1884 the addition to the orphanage was finished. The new building was an improvement to the street, and provided much-needed accommodation and some extra rooms, two of which were set apart for sick children ; and very soon afterwards we required them. Fever became again very prevalent in town, and, notwithstanding our good ventilation and all our precautions, several children got ill. All recovered except one little girl. She was never

a strong child, and from the first the doctor had not good hopes of her recovery. We sent for her mother, who came and watched by her child. The poor girl was deaf from an early stage, and unable to speak for some days, so that we could hold very little communication with her ; but of her preparation for eternity we never had a doubt, and many of her sayings were remembered by the children long after she was taken home. She always did her work well. It had been her habit to retire to some quiet place before breakfast, taking one or two others with her, when she would read a few verses from her Bible, talk about heaven, tell of her love of Jesus, and wish to prepare to live with Him. The matron, who was a Christian, observed her conduct, and encouraged her to live for God ; and we have every reason to believe, for *her*, ' to depart was to be with Jesus.' Her short life and quiet death made a great impression on her companions, and are calculated to inspire with hope all who instruct the little ones in the simple Bible truths. We may not always see the fruit of our labour, but if we do our duty, we can trust God to fulfil His own promises ; and He who carries the lambs in His bosom will doubtless bless those who endeavour to gather them into His fold.

Copying from the Report of 1885, I find that ' In 1865 there were 29 schools in existence, and 23 children in the orphanage ; now, in 1885, the schools number 38, with an attendance of 1,300, and the orphanage has in connection with it 60 children. The annual income at the former date was about £800, while for the last three years the average has been close on £2,000. The money is all needed to provide for the larger number of children, and the necessity—owing to the increased cost of living—of adding something to the inadequate salaries of teachers. It is most cheering and encouraging that, notwithstanding the depression in the trading and agricultural world, the liberality of the Lord's people has been fully manifested.'

In 1886 a little boy was taken from our care to the home above. Little J. R. was one of two children that were born six months after their father's death. Jimmy's twin

brother died, and he was placed with others in the orphanage. He was a small, delicate child, and required much care ; he lived to be twelve years of age. He suffered from rheumatism and a weak chest. During the last winter his hands and limbs were often swollen, and he moved with difficulty. He suffered much pain, but was generally cheerful, and never so happy as when among the children who were always kind to him. Two days before Christmas he was worse than usual, and kept his bed. The matron went upstairs to see if he would take some breakfast ; she found him quietly sleeping, and, having many things to attend to, she went away, and left someone in the room to tell when he awoke. After some time she went up again ; the little fellow still lay peacefully. She spoke, but there was no answer ; she put her hand on his face—it was cold. The spirit had fled, and the little sufferer had gone home to God gently in his sleep. The children were awed by the sudden death of their little favourite. No decorations were put up for Christmas, and our annual treat was postponed.'

In 1888 a boy writes to his brother still with us : ' Dear brother, get on the Lord's side at once. I am sorry I did not do so sooner. You and I should be very thankful for all the teaching of Holy Scripture we have received in the orphanage ; when our father and mother died, surely the Lord took us up.'

Last summer we called to see a boy who had been with us some time. His father had been Scotch ; his mother was a Roman Catholic, but wished her children to grow up in their father's faith ; but, living quite alone, she brought this child home for company. Having heard of our proposed visit, he got excited, and when we arrived he was quite overcome, and lay unconscious for a long time. We waited till he recovered, and his first words were, ' Oh, Mr. Armstrong, will you take me back ?' His mother told us he had never been content since she brought him away, and she would be thankful if Mr. Armstrong would take him again. So we brought him home again with us. He got on very well afterwards, and was in course of time put into a situation.

In the summer of 1888 we took our whole family to the seaside, and had some needed painting done in the Orphanage. In the autumn of the same year Mr. Armstrong's health broke down, and he was obliged to leave home for a season. In the spring of 1889 he was enabled by God's goodness to resume his interesting and arduous work. The children were very well behaved in his absence, and gave us a hearty welcome home. Gratitude is ever pleasant and encouraging, and the affection shown by these children was at all times a stimulant and comfort, and now most cheery on our return from our lengthened sojourn abroad.

CHAPTER IV

THE parents of A. L. were Scotch. Her father was a godly tradesman. He came by his death in a very sad and sudden manner, leaving his widow and several children unprovided for. The mother and elder children got work, and two little ones were sent to Ballina. A. was a quiet, delicate little thing; the youngest and the pet in the orphanage. She had no serious illness at any time, but developed bone disease in one of her feet when about ten years of age. We were obliged to send her to a Dublin hospital, as an operation was considered necessary. When able to leave hospital, her mother took her to her lodgings. Being in Dublin, I called to see her. I felt grieved when I entered her room. There in the far corner of a large, dark room she lay on a little bed, all the day alone. The moment she saw me, she burst into tears, and as soon as she could speak she gave me a warm welcome, and asked me would I bring her home with me. She said she was so lonely all day when mother was out, and longed to be back among the children. When her mother returned she said she would be thankful to have her with us again. The poor child could not be kept in the hospital, and she did not know what to do with her; but I said: 'If she does not get better, you may regret her being away so far from you.' 'Oh no,' she said; 'I know my dear child will never be better in this world, but I will be happy to know she is comfortable and taken care of.' So we brought her back to her early home to die. We got her crutches, but she never seemed able to use them much. The girls



LITTLE GEORGE AND JOHNNY.

[To face page 279]

used to carry her into the field, where she got the fresh air, and they were all kind to her. The last year of her life she was confined to bed, and her patient suffering, as well as her advice and encouragement to the children to love and serve God, were the means of much good, and her appeals to their affections to follow her to Heaven were never forgotten by many of them. Her chief study was the Bible, and her great pleasure was to write letters to her mother and brothers exhorting them to come to Jesus to be saved. From some letters written by one of these boys we had reason to believe this little dying child was the means of leading both her mother and brothers to the Cross of Christ. Her end was very peaceful, and she was much missed by her little companions.

In 1890 a little boy complained of severe pain in his ear. He was always a quiet child, quite happy, but fond of sitting by himself watching the children at their games rather than joining in them, seldom getting into trouble, and a general favourite in the house. He was called Little George, to distinguish him from another boy of the same name. The local doctor treated him, and he got better; but several months after the pain in the ear returned, and by advice we sent him to an hospital in Dublin, where he received every care and attention from both doctors and nurses. But the disease had attacked the brain, and could not be cured, and the little weary head, after much suffering, rested in the sleep which knows no earthly waking. The puny flower, too fragile to bloom on earth, was transplanted to adorn the garden of the Lord in fadeless beauty. While little George was confined to bed in the orphanage, he was most patient, gentle, and affectionate. His faith in Jesus was remarkable in one so young. He would speak of the many mansions Christ was preparing for His people as if but rooms in a grand house. Another boy, who had always been delicate, slept in an adjoining room. One night George, who had been wakeful and restless, called to him: 'Johnny, are you asleep?' Johnny answered: 'No.' 'Is it dark out there?' said George. 'Yes,' replied Johnny; 'quite dark.' 'Oh, it is bright here,'

said the sick child, 'for Jesus is here, and He makes all light.'

The words were spoken to express his own feelings, but they were brought home by the Holy Spirit. Six months after Johnny lay on a bed of weakness ; consumption, which had always threatened him, had done its work. His body was growing weaker, but daily his spiritual strength increased. He had ever clung to life, but at last began to realize that his time on earth must be short, and day by day he became more resigned and even happy in the prospect of going to Jesus. One night, when the shortness of breath prevented his sleeping, I was sitting beside him. He said : 'Mrs. Armstrong, do you remember what little George said to me one dark night about Jesus being the Light ? I wondered what he meant *then*, but *now* I think I know myself. Since that time I have often thought of Jesus as our Light.' My heart was glad to hear him speak thus, for I had not as yet been fully assured of the reality of his faith. At this time a dear Christian friend had some conversation with him, and the precious promises of God which he had known, but which so far had not brought him much comfort, laid hold on his heart, bringing peace and joy in believing, and the simple words of a hymn she taught him, with many Bible verses, were ever on his lips as the weary days and nights passed by.

By the advice of the friend who had sent Johnny to our care, and through the kindness of David Drummond, Esq., of Dublin—ever the friend of the suffering and the poor—we got the boy into the hospital for incurables, where he was comfortable for the few remaining weeks of his life. In the room with him was another invalid, who was able to move about, and was very kind to our little lad. When very near his end, he became unconscious, and lay perfectly still for several hours. Those about him thought his spirit had fled, when suddenly he sat up, clasped his hands together, and exclaimed : 'I see Him ! I see Him ! I see Jesus coming for me !' and immediately fell back and expired. He has gone to the rest he longed for—'the rest that remaineth for the people of God'—and, as from

the spirit land, came the words of a leaflet I had given him one day when he was unusually fretful :

‘ I shine in the light of God, His likeness stamps my brow,
Through the valley of death my feet have trod, and I reign in
glory now.’

The leaflet I thought had been thrown away, but it was found carefully preserved in his pocket. The seed is not lost, though the blade does not appear at once. It may be after many days, but surely the return shall be found.

In 1892 two little girls were taken from our circle to join the happy family in Heaven. One of these had only been with us about two years, being left perfectly desolate by the death of a brother, the only relative she had to depend on. She belonged to a consumptive family, though no decided mark of the disease had appeared. Such children are peculiarly desolate, as few institutions will receive them. She was a very sweet, gentle child, always ready to oblige. We did not press her to learn lessons, but kept her much in the open air, and at night in a room by herself. Though always languid, she never showed any symptoms of consumption. She only lay a few days in bed, and her short illness was lightened by a bright faith and longing desire to go to Jesus. No fear marked her face, and gently her Father in Heaven took home His little lamb. Though we missed her placid pale face, we laid her to rest thankfully, knowing how unfit she would ever be for the battle of life. The other child, who passed away only a few weeks later, had been a terrible sufferer for months. She was too ill to be kept in the orphanage, and we could not think of sending her into the poor house hospital, so we brought her into our own house. Severe as her suffering was, her patience was wonderful, and her faith unclouded. When tempted to be impatient, she would express her regret so sincerely that those attending her were drawn to her in deep sympathy. No matter how ill or fretful she was, a kind word would soothe her, and with her soft beautiful eyes she would look up and express her thanks for any little service done for her. The disease was such that she

had to be kept away from the other children, but they were allowed to pay her short visits, and she was always much pleased to hear a hymn sung by one of her little companions. After the doctor had been in to see her one night she said to her nurse : ' Kate, what did the doctor say ? I would like to know all he says. It does not frighten me to die, and I know God will help me to bear all the pain I may have to suffer. It is nice to look forward to Heaven ! It is just as if I was going a journey—packing up and preparing to travel—and looking forward to the rest at the end after being *so tired* ! And I will not be a stranger in Heaven ; there are many there I know. I will see Mrs. Reid* again, and I love her the best of any of them—and Jesus will be with us all.' Many a lesson of faith and patience did this child teach older people, who called to see her. I missed her very much, for she was brought to us when a baby, and I never intended to part with her. Her love to us all was devotion. She was very clever and wise beyond her age, but she is better off than she ever could be here. The weary head aches no more, and the distorted limbs are perfect now in the land where sin and sorrow never enter, for there is nothing to hurt or annoy in all God's holy temple.

* My mother.

CHAPTER V

IT was our custom to give an annual entertainment in the orphanage. The last we were able to have was in 1890. Owing to Mr. Armstrong's increasing weakness, and other causes, we were afterwards obliged to confine the Christmas amusements to the children, and a few of their companions. Rev. John Barnett, Deputy of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, was in town, and was present at this entertainment in 1890. He congratulated 'Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong, and all connected with the institution, on the exceedingly enjoyable and instructive entertainment with which they had been favoured that evening. . . . It seemed marvellous to him how the large room could have been so rapidly decorated and transformed as to be made suitable for the reception of such a large company. He was perfectly unprepared for such an entertainment. . . . Mr. Armstrong was a capital reader. . . . It was delightful to witness the enjoyment of the children, and to hear them sing. . . . Also very pleasing to see a representative there of all the Protestant Churches in the town. . . . He was happy in being able to sincerely congratulate everyone, from Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong to the youngest child, on the success which had attended their proceedings.'

The children always entertained the guests. A Christmas-tree, the gift of some neighbouring gentlemen, was generally a great attraction to the little ones. The boys had a flute band, which was a source of amusement, and practising in the winter evenings prevented them wanting to go out after their work was over. On one occasion a

concert was given in town, and the orphanage children were asked to take part in it, which we esteemed a great compliment. The local paper says : ' The children of the Presbyterian Orphanage came on the platform. . . . This was the part of the proceedings, perhaps, which created the greatest amount of enthusiasm. The faultless way in which the children sang and acted, and their neat and bright appearance, elicited much applause and many kind remarks from the audience.'

In the summer of 1890 the last New Year's entertainment was repeated in Dromore West. One bright May morning we all started off in great spirits. A gentleman in the neighbourhood gave us the use of a field for the children to play in ; the public meeting was not till eight o'clock. The day was one of thorough enjoyment, winding up with a delightful drive home by moonlight, which was to the little ones as novel as it was pleasant, the quiet road and still air being enlivened by the cheerful voices of the children, who to the last were wide awake. The local paper gives the following account : ' A musical entertainment was given in the Presbyterian Schoolroom, Dromore West, on Thursday, 19th inst., by the Rev. Thomas Armstrong and his orphan children. The programme consisted of " The Japanese Fan," an action song by A. J. Cowley, which was sung by the *little* children ; a service of song—" Mother's Last Words " ; and " The Toy Symphony," by Haydn, with words. The entertainment was looked forward to with considerable interest. An unusually large number—upwards of 250—were admitted by ticket, several of whom came distances of seven and eight miles. They were not disappointed in their expectations. The service of song, which contained many religious and moral lessons, was well read by Mr. Armstrong, and the sympathetic manner in which the children sang the songs rendered it most effective. But the " Japanese Fan " and " Toy Symphony " were highly entertaining, and the appearance and good training of the children was a subject of general remark. A vote of thanks was passed to Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong and their children, and the

audience dispersed, highly gratified and recognising the usefulness of the institution.'

The Ballina Orphanage has always occupied the first place in the affections and interest of Christian friends in Scotland. Its varied history has intensified the interest. It has provided accommodation, education, and spiritual training for hundreds of helpless desolate children. Cases which did not come within the rules of our Presbyterian Orphanage, or any other, were here provided for. Those who knew the institution best bare strongest testimony to its efficiency, and were its most liberal supporters. The heart of the superintendent was often cheered by the kind words and sympathy he and his wife ever received from all who visited the institution, and in grateful and believing confidence he placed over the new part of the building the word 'Ebenezer.' His fond hope that the orphanage would be retained as a part of the Irish Mission, I grieve to say, has not been realized. Yet, though the door of the Ballina Orphanage is closed, the good which has been done shall last through eternity. Hundreds of children have been trained in the truths of God's word. They are to be found in all parts of the world, and in every rank of life, in their turn giving to others that word of life which blessed themselves, fulfilling in their riper years the hopes of their childhood. Of such I do not write, though I can still follow the career of many with pleasure. But of those lambs of the flock who during the thirty years of our orphanage labours were safely gathered home by the Good Shepherd I can speak with confidence; and the remembrance of their warm affection and pure faith shall ever tune my now lonely heart to solemn grateful praise; and the time cannot be very distant when these little ones and those who taught them shall *all* rejoice together, where separation can never come, and where God shall wipe away all tears.

As in other years, the country is unquestionably passing through a revolution, the consequence of which shall effect the social, moral, and spiritual wellbeing of the people in the immediate future. There can be no doubt but that

the one thing needful is to bring the entire population into living contact with the truth of God, and that the circulation of the Scriptures, and an earnest, loving brotherly, exposition by Christian men, form the one urgent duty and high privilege of all who love their country and seek the welfare of her people.

The past encourages further effort, strengthens faith, and inspires hope. Amid the troubles and ills of our beloved land, here is the great Peacemaker and Panacea, even the Word of the Living God. Despite the mighty and manifold opposition and obstacles in the way, Ireland shall one day be numbered among the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

THE END



RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library

or to the

NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

- 2-month loans may be renewed by calling
(510) 642-6753
- 1-year loans may be recharged by bringing
books to NRLF
- Renewals and recharges may be made
4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

SENT ON ILL

AUG 03 2005

U.C. BERKELEY

YC135002

